

Boy Scout Values ■ Bob Dole on WWII Memorial ■ Hidden Taxes

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Legion

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THE AMERICAN Legion

FEBRUARY 2004
Vol. 156, No. 2

For God and Country

features

12 Values and the Boy Scouts

Americanism Commission Chairman Joe Caouette laments continued attacks on the youth organization.

18 A Lasting Tribute

Former Sen. Bob Dole praises Americans young and old who helped fund the World War II memorial.

24 Tax Americana

At every level, government is hungry for new sources of tax revenue.

By Donald Lambro

30 The Golden Age of Coffee

The world's most popular drink is second only to petroleum in international trade value.

By William Eckenbarger

32 A Matter of Trust

Last summer's controversial proposal to close seven VA hospitals left veterans feeling betrayed. *By Jeff Stoffer*

Cover photo: Corbis



SYMBOL OF SACRIFICE 18



TIDAL WAVE OF TAXES 24



OUR CUPS OVERFLOWETH 30



departments

4 Vet Voice

8 Commander's Message

Our nation's top priority

10 Big Issues

Private-school voucher system

52 Under the Radar

America's nuclear umbrella, the E.U. constitution and our shrinking Navy.

54 Living Well

The pain of shingles, the pleasure of gardening.

60 Legion News

Family Support Network, new military health study and an Eagle Scout's Legion pavilion.

70 Comrades

76 Parting Shots



The American Legion Magazine, a leader among national general-interest publications, is published monthly by The American Legion for its 2.7 million members. These wartime veterans, working through 15,000 community-level posts, dedicate themselves to God and Country and traditional American values; strong national security; adequate and compassionate care for veterans, their widows and orphans; community service; and the wholesome development of our nation's youth.

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Good and evil

Excellent article on the horrors of North Korea (“Gulag Nation,” December). A few years ago, someone showed me a satellite photo taken at night of the Korean peninsula. It was a startling picture of good and evil. North of the DMZ the land was absolutely black, not even a pinpoint of light. South of the line, cities were lit and the land blazed with the lights of free men and women. It gave



me a jolt and a warm feeling for having fought in Korea with the 1st Marine Division.

– W.J. Smith, Little Rock, Ark.

New perspective

I read “Gulag Nation” and the interview with Dr. Norbert Vollertsen (“For the Children”). My attitude has changed considerably. I understand America’s complex position on political and human-rights issues. I also understand that while political preferences can be debated, human rights cannot.

Kim Jong Il and his political cronies need to be removed from power sooner rather than later. If they are not, more of our military will pay the ultimate price. The fact that one of his political prison camps is the size of Washington, D.C., speaks for itself. God forbid North Korea obtain the technology to produce and deliver a nuclear weapon. Just as China is now seeing the value of economic trade, I believe North Korea has the potential to contribute to the world market in its own way. Once economic conditions improve, the rest of the pieces will fall into place.

– J. Stephenson, Buffalo Gap, Va.

Modest outrage

Richard Parker places too much emphasis on a city’s hours-long discomfort produced by even the most disruptive protests (“A Freedom Too Far,” December). After stating the value of unfettered speech and damage done by repressive police practices, he says San Francisco citizens went too far. I disagreed then and

disagree even more emphatically now. I was outraged when we lied our way into war in Iraq, and I am further outraged by the continued loss of our nation’s soldiers. San Francisco’s outrage seems modest considering the damage done in this war. Damage by protesters is usually small and limited to property. Police usually cause death and injury. The media usually emphasize damage by the protesters while minimizing coverage of death and injury to protesters.

The Feb. 15, 2002, protest in New York was poorly managed and resulted in violent interactions because of the limitations on movement and speech. Conversely, police in Washington –

which has daily protests – do not use cages. They are not nearly as confrontational, I assume due to training and experience. Subsequently, large protests go smoothly, with little, if any, injury and property damage.

– Thomas W. McKeon, Little Ferry, N.J.

In poor taste

The story about tattoos is the most disgusting article I’ve ever read in your magazine (“More Than Skin Deep,” December). Desecrating your body with tattoos is bad enough, but an article that glorifies it in a great magazine such as yours is a big mistake. The photograph of a naked man tattooed from head to toe is disgraceful and borders on pornography. In my opinion, that man is in need of psychological counseling.

– Jack H. Stuart, Nampa, Idaho

Poor example

In December’s Big Issues, Sen. Dick Durbin, D-Ill., uses the example of a sergeant’s daughter dying as a result of a careless accident to defend large medical malpractice awards. If a sergeant dies in a careless accident in Iraq, will Durbin and his fellow senators vote to award his parents and family more than \$250,000? I think not. Only his wife will receive a small sum and survivor pension.

– John Y. Seiling, Powell, Ohio

Reasonable reform

If Sen. Dick Durbin has the best available analysis of the medical malpractice crisis, then enacting reasonable reforms should be prioritized. His example is ludicrous, tragic as the McCormack family’s case was. If \$250,000 is not enough, what should the “standard” be? Unfortunately, too many people rationalize life’s events in terms of dollars. How can a price be put on the life of a living person, “life” being a non-economic factor? Lawyers profess to help those who suffer loss due to medical malpractice by asking a percentage of any award given? Does that reflect their economic loss potential?

As an underwriter with several

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major insurers of malpractice insurance, I have witnessed abuses by all involved: insurer representatives, lawyers, medical personnel and claimants. I see need for reform. If establishing a non-economic cap is the only barrier to enactment, let's wake up.

— Ted Maznicki, Mount Airy, Ga.

Three solutions

Sen. John Ensign's HEALTH Act to cap punitive damage at \$250,000 might curb insurance cost, but more is needed. Punitive damage suits were allowed under English law, but they barely made it into U.S. law, as many delegates felt punitive damages were unjust enrichment. The theory was that the pounds would punish the person or business and benefit the public. However, in the United States, insurance companies pay both actual and punitive, meaning the "guilty" person or company financially suffers little. The public ultimately absorbs the awards through higher costs, especially malpractice insurance. Most often, the amounts of injuries awarded are beyond the plaintiff's wildest dreams.

A longstanding U.S. legal premise holds that citizens cannot punish citizens, thus preventing vigilante law. Only a government law-enforcement agency can dispense physical or financial punishment. Therefore, all punitive damage suits should only originate from county, state or federal prosecutors representing the public against the offending person or company.

Remedy No. 1: The "law" should make the plaintiffs testify before a jury, under threat of perjury, that they and not lawyers established their actual economic and non-economic damages.

Remedy No. 2: Following a decision favorable to plaintiffs, economic and non-economic loss should be established by the judge and jury in court, including legal expenses. Any money plaintiffs received directly from insurance or any government benefit applicable to that "injury" should be deducted from the total. Claims of the individual would thus be

settled. Perhaps the cap would apply here.

Remedy No. 3: Should evidence and testimony cause the judge to believe punitive damages would benefit the public, the judge would refer the case to the appropriate prosecuting attorney, who would determine if any laws had been broken and by what recourse financial punishment would benefit all citizens.

— Darrell L. Apple, Gladstone, Mo.

Stop handouts

How many people realize that in the recently passed prescription-drug bill for senior citizens is \$1 billion mandated for the health care of illegal aliens? That's \$1 billion for illegal aliens who sneaked into my country and have no right to be here. Our VA representatives practically have to get on their knees to beg government officials for adequate veterans health care. If my own government is more concerned with illegal aliens than its own citizens, then it's well past time to deport all illegal aliens now and put our military at the borders to prevent more illegal entries. When word gets out that America gives free health care to illegal aliens, the flood you see now could turn into a tidal wave.

— John Mele, Basking Ridge, N.J.

Time to move on

I read with interest Jackie Rothenberg's article "A Final Resting Place" (November). I sympathize with and offer my condolences to all those who suffered as a result of Sept. 11, 2001. We all have lost loved ones at some time, a fact with which one must come to grips. From a practical perspective, however, to return all the ashes and dirt back to Ground Zero would be a daunting task. The projected cost must be borne by those wanting the endeavor to move forward. We must realize that life is not always fair and move ahead.

— Howard Osterhoudt, Sharon Springs, N.Y.

Forgotten soldiers

I am disappointed in the November issue. Once again, I see

no mention of those surviving veterans of World War I in the month we observe Veterans Day. These are the men who gave The American Legion its name, gave meaning to the 11th hour of the 11th day of the 11th month and promoted the GI Bill. I can't remember when I last read any reference to them, as living people, in our magazine. I don't know how many are left, though I do know only two are from Maine. Can't we tip our hats to them before the last one leaves the ranks?

— Dana A. Smith, Tenants Harbor, Maine

War not for weak

I was listening to a radio talk show the other day. An irate young man called in and said, "We need to get the U.S. troops out of Iraq right now." When pressed, the caller admitted he had a brother in the Army, stationed in Iraq and said he didn't want to see his brother "come home in a body bag." He went on to say, "My brother didn't join the Army to go to war. He just enlisted to get a college education." If that's true, I blame the Army's recruiting and public-relations personnel.

Years ago, the Army's recruiting slogan was, "Be all that you can be in the U.S. Army." The advertisements showed people in school, working on machines, at the beach — any place but at war. The idea came across that the Army is a sort of charm school for young men and women.

As bad as that campaign was, it pales in comparison to the absolutely awful "Army of One." Someone who wants to be an "army of one" winds up a dead soldier. The Army's public-relations people have done a great job tapping into the spirit of autonomous individualism in America's youth, but have they prepared them for the reality of war?

Why not capitalize on the fact that the U.S. Army is the best in the world? A stint in the Army "will make a man out of you." Why not appeal to every young man's desire to be a warrior?

— David Epps, Peachtree City, Ga.

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Quoting the great 19th-century thinker John Stuart Mill, *San Diego Union-Tribune* columnist Joseph Perkins recently reaffirmed my belief in a strong national defense: "War is an ugly thing, but not the ugliest of things. The decayed and degraded state of moral and patriotic feeling which thinks that nothing is worth war is much worse. The person who has nothing for which he is willing to fight is a miserable creature and has no chance of being free unless made and kept so by the exertions of better men than himself."

The American Legion has always stood for a strong America.

That is why I am pleased with the 2004 National Defense Authorization Act recently signed by President Bush. The provisions include the authority to spend 3.4 percent of GDP on defense, military pay raises, reasonable environmental regulations that do not interfere with military training, and access to health insurance for Guard and Reserve personnel and their families who lack coverage.

The defense increase comes at a time when America's enemies are hell-bent on destroying this great country. A scant two-plus years after planes careened into the World Trade Center and Pentagon, some misguided peaceniks want us to retreat from the War on Terror. During the Cold War, this same crowd demanded that America unilaterally disarm only to be surprised when the Soviet Union fell without the United States having to sacrifice its national security. They were wrong then, and they are wrong now.

Meanwhile, the media harp about the billions spent protecting us, yet nary a word is said about the army of lobbyists pushing favored social programs. In this age of nuclear dirty bombs and devastating chemical and biological weapons, do we really want to fight a war on the cheap?

Taking care of those who fight is another moral imperative. While I am disappointed that the measure does not repeal the disabled veterans tax for all service-disabled military retirees, I am grateful for this positive step that helps some of these veterans. Democrats like Nevada Sen. Harry Reid and Rep. Jim Marshall of Georgia have tirelessly fought to repeal the unjust tax, along with Republican Reps. Mike Bilirakis, Chris Smith, Walter Jones, Rob Simmons and Rick Renzi. Further credit should go to Reps. Duncan Hunter,

Ike Skelton, Roy Blunt, Steny Hoyer, Tom DeLay and Nancy Pelosi, as well as Sens. John Warner, Carl Levin, Ted Stevens and Robert Byrd, for negotiating this legislation through the conference committee. It is sad that some disabled retirees will pass away before they receive their full benefits because of a 10-year phase-in provision, but I am optimistic that lawmakers will continue to work on scrapping this unfair tax and provide long overdue relief.

They should be praised for raising the imminent-danger pay to \$225 per month and the military family-separation allowance to \$250 per month, while increasing the average servicemember's base pay by more than 4 percent.

The act also spends more than \$9 billion for the continued development of ballistic missile defense, including \$651.6 million for Patriot Advanced Capability-3, the wonder-weapons used to protect our troops. Another \$310.6 million will be spent for research and development of the CN-21, a next-generation aircraft carrier slated to join the Navy's fleet in 2013.

Under this legislation, military installations that cooperate with state and federal Fish and Wildlife Services in developing an Integrated Natural Resources Management Plan need not worry about further designations of critical habitat in their training areas because of the Endangered Species Act.

Thanks to the Defense Authorization Act, we are improving the quality of life for our troops and our disabled retirees. We are upgrading and buying more weapons. We are modernizing our military training. The War on Terror and our continued presence in Iraq and Afghanistan have been expensive, but the spending is having an impact. Terrorist attacks numbered 199 in 2002, compared to 355 in 2001. Two horrendously evil regimes have fallen, and our enemies are on the run. America is safer but we must never again let our guard down.

This election year there will be plenty of pandering and promises. Many programs are important, but Congress' responsibility to provide for the common defense is explicitly spelled out in Article I, Section 8 of the U.S. Constitution. If our national security fails us, no programs will seem important and no programs will be provided for. National security is, and must remain, America's No. 1 priority.

Notice of voting rights and hearing to consider whether to confirm the Pittsburgh Corning reorganization.

A plan for the Chapter 11 reorganization of Pittsburgh Corning Corporation ("PCC") called the Second Amended Plan of Reorganization (the "Plan") has been proposed by PCC, the Committee of Asbestos Creditors and the Future Claimants Representative. Those with claims against, or interests in, PCC, or those with asbestos personal injury claims against PCC, PPG Industries, Inc. ("PPG") and Corning Incorporated ("Corning"), including related companies PRC-DeSoto International, Inc., Porter Paint, M.B. Suydam, and Corhart Refractories Company, can vote to accept or reject the Plan by **March 2, 2004**. The United States Bankruptcy Court for the Western District of Pennsylvania (the "Court") will consider whether to confirm the Plan at a hearing starting **May 3, 2004**.

A detailed notice about the Plan, a statement called the Second Amended Disclosure Statement describing the Plan, a copy of the Plan itself, and voting materials, called a "Solicitation Package," has been mailed to known claimants or their lawyers.

KEY PARTS OF THE PLAN

The Plan proposes a trust, called the Asbestos PI Trust, to pay asbestos personal injury claims. An injunction under sections 524(g) and 105 of the Bankruptcy Code, applicable to all people and entities, will result in the permanent channeling of all asbestos personal injury claims against PCC, PPG, Corning or any Asbestos Protected Party into the Asbestos PI Trust. This injunction gives PCC, PPG, Corning and other protected parties broad releases from liability. This means those with asbestos personal injury claims won't be able to pursue them against PCC, PPG, Corning or other protected parties. **You should read the Plan and Disclosure Statement carefully, for details about how these things affect your rights.**

VOTING ON THE PLAN

There is a Voting Procedures Order in the Solicitation Package that describes exactly who can vote and how to vote. The Disclosure Statement helps you decide whether to vote to accept or reject the Plan. You don't have to vote, but you should. **Your legal rights may be affected if you don't vote.** To be counted,

a ballot must be received by the Voting Agent by 4:00 p.m. (Eastern Standard Time) on **March 2, 2004**. Ballots not received by the deadline will not be counted. Holders of certain disputed claims can vote, but must file an Allowance Motion to do so, by a deadline explained in the Solicitation Package.

ASBESTOS PERSONAL INJURY CLAIMS

Proof of an asbestos personal injury claim does not have to be filed with the Court at this time. The Voting Procedures

describe special voting steps for holders of asbestos personal injury claims against PCC, PPG and Corning. Lawyers for those who hold these claims may vote on the Plan on behalf of their clients if authorized by the client. If you are unsure whether your lawyer is authorized to vote on your behalf, contact your lawyer. The names and addresses of voting claimants will be forwarded to the Asbestos PI Trust so they can later be notified of the opportunity, and how, to file a claim.

THE HEARING ON THE PLAN

A hearing to consider confirming the Plan will begin before Judge Judith K. Fitzgerald at the U.S. Bankruptcy Court, Western District of Pennsylvania, 5414 U.S. Steel Tower, 600 Grant Street, Pittsburgh, PA on May 3, 2004 at 9:30 a.m. You may attend the hearing, but you don't have to. Objections, if any, must be submitted in writing and received by **April 15, 2004**, as described in the Solicitation Package.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

If you hold a claim described here, and you or your lawyer did not get a Solicitation Package, or you want more information about the Plan, Disclosure Statement, or Voting Procedures, you should call toll free 1-800-375-7931, visit www.asbestos-pcc.com, or write to Pittsburgh Corning Corporation, c/o The Trumbull Group, P.O. Box 721, Windsor, CT 06095.

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Asbestos Roof Coatings?**

**Do you have claims
—including asbestos
personal injury claims—
against Pittsburgh Corning
Corp., PPG Industries, Inc.,
Corning Incorporated, or
Corhart Refractories Co.?**

Private-school voucher system

SUPPORT

Rep. John Sullivan
R-Okla.



Most public schools do a great job. But too many children are trapped in schools where failure is the norm, and the culture is one of despair and hopelessness.

Just as the federal government provides Pell Grants and GI Bill commitments to college students for use at public,

private, or religious schools, parents should have similar choices for their elementary and secondary schoolchildren. Why shouldn't the federal government provide K-12 students with the same kind of educational options we provide other students?

All students should have access to a quality education of their own choosing, despite where they live or the school district they're in.

What good is a college loan if a student doesn't have a quality educational foundation? All students should have access to a quality education of their own choosing, despite where they live or the school district they're in.

Local control and innovation needs to be implemented if students

in failing schools are to have opportunities to succeed. For instance, Washington D.C. schools are considered among the most troubled in the nation. Crime, drug abuse and lack of discipline have crippled the educational opportunities there. Two-thirds of fourth-graders have "below basic" reading ability despite the second-highest per-pupil expenditure in the country – \$9,650 – and teachers who are among the best paid in the nation. We should fund education, but instead of throwing money at the problem, we should focus on keeping schools accountable, and looking for solid results.

It's clear the schools in our nation's capital are in a crisis. Emboldened by *Zelman v. Simmons-Harris*, the U.S. Supreme Court decision that upheld Cleveland's school-choice program, Washington's Democratic Mayor Anthony Williams has led parents in actively pursuing more choice in their children's educations. Williams and other brave local leaders in Washington understand that parents, not bureaucrats, should control the educational destinies of their children.

Rep. William Lacy Clay
D-Mo.

OPPOSE



Last summer, a plan to give 2,000 District of Columbia students vouchers to attend private schools passed the House Government Reform Committee without academic accountability. The bill went to the Senate.

At that time, I could see Republicans were determined to pass the measure. I made a concerted effort to hold voucher proponents academically accountable, but to no avail. My voucher amendment, which included an accountability benchmark, failed by four votes, along party lines.

Federal accountability rules that apply to public schools also should apply to schools that accept voucher students. I see the voucher movement in the district as a precursor to what Republicans are trying to do around the nation: diminish public education and ensure the survival of costly, mostly unaffordable, private educational institutions.

The bill that eventually passed the House calls for \$15 million a year for five years to be given to 2,000 low-income students currently in D.C. public schools so the students can attend private institutions. Taxpayers will fund up to \$7,500 per student, per year. Republicans call the program "scholarships," while Democrats call it "vouchers."

Private-school vouchers use tax dollars to pay for private schools and weaken public schools by draining them of students and funds. As a way to protect taxpayer dollars, I sought to include an amendment to the school-voucher bill that would call for academic accountability in order to maintain the funding.

As I see it, the bottom line on vouchers is that they hurt all public schools and the children that comprise the majority of American families.

The bottom line on vouchers is that they hurt all public schools and the children... the majority of American families.

Our public schools need more money, not less. Vouchers may give choices to some parents and a handful of children, but in doing that, they threaten the future of more American children than they help.

YOUR OPINIONS COUNT

Senators and representatives are interested in constituent viewpoints. You may express your views in writing at the following addresses:

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Americanism Commission
Chairman Joe Caouette.
James V. Carroll





Boy Scouts of America

The Boy Scouts of America thought it won a major victory in the U.S. Supreme Court on June 28, 2000.

The Court upheld the Scouts' right to prevent openly homosexual men from serving as Scoutmasters, thus protecting the organization's ability to set its own membership criteria. Yet the organization has been under fire ever since.

"The opponents of Scouting have demonstrated that they are unwilling to tolerate the views and values of others," former Attorney General Edwin Meese wrote in the July 2001 issue of *The American Legion Magazine*. "They often advocate diversity but tolerate only the lock-step cadence of political correctness."

Those opponents have succeeded in banning the Boy Scouts from some public meeting places across the country and have

pressured many charitable campaigns to drop the nonprofit Boy Scouts as a participating organization.

Despite the Boy Scouts' Supreme Court victory, the judicial battles have not ended. The organization, with the support of The American Legion, is asking the Supreme Court to overturn a lower court's decision that allows the state of Connecticut to exclude the Boy Scouts as a participant in its state-employee charitable-contribution campaign.

Joseph E. Caouette, chairman of The American Legion Americanism Commission, believes attacks against the Boy Scouts are battles in a larger war – a war against American values. The Korean War veteran and retired postmaster reiterated his call for higher morality in a recent interview with *The American Legion Magazine*.

Values and the Boy Scouts

Americanism chairman laments attacks on morality.

"The American Legion, like the Scouts, is a private organization, and someday a group with a different agenda could target us."

The American Legion Magazine:

Two years ago you said, "As long as the Scouts' aims and purposes remain intact, The American Legion will continue supporting them." Do you feel the Boy Scouts of America has maintained its aims and purposes?

Joseph E. Caouette: Certainly the national organization has. Most local Scout troops have as well. In my town of Rollinsford, N.H., we have the Daniel Webster Troop 187. They set the foundations for America. They are a force for good, morality, a belief in God or a supreme being. But because of this, opponents call them a "discriminatory" organization. That just scares me because it could happen to all of us. It could happen to The American Legion. The American Legion, like the Scouts, is a private organization, and someday a group with a different agenda could target us.

TALM: *How widespread is discrimination against the Boy Scouts?*

JC: Very. It's happening in Connecticut, Florida, California and many other states. Sometimes we lean over too far to

please minority groups. I know from experience. When I went to high school, I could barely speak English. I was educated by French Canadian nuns for my first eight years. My father said I had better learn to speak English if I'm going to get ahead in life. I have a French name that people can barely say, much less spell. But we are allowing minority views to supersede the majority, and that just scares me. That's against all tenets of democracy. There are times when court rulings go against my view, but in the democratic process you have to eventually yield to the majority. There are those that are trying to impose their sexual lifestyles on the majority. Well, excuse me, but the Boy Scouts don't want gays. They went all the way to the Supreme Court. The gays lost this battle, and I can't understand why they are still getting the support of the media, responsible organizations like the United Way and some banks. Now the Boy Scouts have to go back to the Supreme Court to say, "We are being discriminated against for doing what you said we have a right to do."

TALM: *What does the controversy say about values in America?*

JC: You read over history and it seems as if the great powers of the world have self-destructed. Do you remember (Soviet leader Nikita) Khrushchev banging his shoe and predicting that we would destroy ourselves from within? I think we're doing it.

I was watching the playoffs between the Red Sox and A's on television when a commercial promoting an upcoming show came on. The language that was used would have been unacceptable when I lived in a Marine barracks. I wasn't born yesterday. I've been exposed to the dirt of the world. Yet we're exposed to that kind of trash on our airwaves. Certainly every child in New England was watching that ball game. Yet we are all exposed to that language. I think it's an attempt to destroy the moral fiber of this country.

The Boy Scouts of America was granted a victory, actually, when it was told that it could determine who is fit to be its leaders. It said that homosexuals couldn't be troop leaders. And because they won the victory, they are under attack. It's an attack on morality.

TALM: *Are there other attacks?*

JC: Sure. Look at the 9th Circuit Court's ban on the Pledge of Allegiance. It concerns me that God is being removed from everyday life. Our founding fathers are spinning in their graves. Look at the Declaration of Independence: "all men are endowed by their Creator." Toward the end of the Declaration, it affirms reliance on divine providence. You don't have to call this providence "God." You can call it "Allah." But the First Amendment protects us from a state church, like what they had in England. 🌿

Article design: Doug Rollison



Boy Scouts of America

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Resolution No. 28

The National Executive Committee of The American Legion reiterated its support for the Boy Scouts of America by unanimously passing Resolution No. 28 during its session last October in Indianapolis. Of particular concern to The American Legion is a ruling by the Second Circuit Court of Appeals that allows Connecticut's state-employee charitable campaign to exclude the Boy Scouts. Although 900 other charities receive funds from the campaign, including various gay and lesbian organizations, the Boy Scouts were singled out in *Boy Scouts of America v. Nancy Wyman* because the organization does not permit avowed homosexuals to serve in its leadership. The Boy Scouts of America is petitioning the U.S. Supreme Court to overturn the case. The following gives The American Legion the authority to file an amicus (friend of court) brief:

Resolution No. 28: Reaffirmation Of Support And Authorization For Appropriation

To Assist The Boy Scouts Of America

Origin: Americanism Commission

Submitted by: Finance Commission

WHEREAS, The American Legion, at its very first national convention in 1919, did adopt a resolution supporting the Boy Scouts of America that stated: "The American Legion heartily commends the principles and achievements of the Boy Scouts and recommends that each post assist the Scout troop in its community in whatever manner practicable"; and

WHEREAS, The American Legion's support for the Boy Scouts has never wavered because we believe that Scouting helps strengthen character, develops good citizenship, and enhances both mental and physical fitness among its participants; and

WHEREAS, The American Legion recognizes that Scouting, with its practical application of the Scout Oath and Law, has always and currently continues to reflect the values held by nearly all Americans; and

WHEREAS, By its sponsorship of Boy Scout Troops throughout the United States and its reaffirmation of support for the BSA in Resolution 334 (September 2000), The American Legion reiterated that we do stand by the Boy Scouts in their efforts "to maintain and practice traditional family values with regard to membership and leadership standards"; and

WHEREAS, Those same traditional family values with regard to membership and leadership standards have been under attack by homosexuals, agnostics, atheists and others for more than 25 years, resulting in at least 38 legal cases being brought against the Boy Scouts in which it was claimed that BSA practices illegal discrimination on religious and sexual preference grounds; and

WHEREAS, The Supreme Court of the United States has upheld the constitutional right of the Boy Scouts of America to prevent openly homosexual men from serving as Scoutmasters, and has further stated that the government cannot compel the BSA to accept such leaders when that acceptance would be at odds with their moral code; and

WHEREAS, The Supreme Court decision affirmed the right of the Boy Scouts and thousands of other groups and organizations, such as The American Legion, to set their own standards and membership policies because an indispensable part of being free is the right of individuals to hold moral positions and to associate with others who share those positions; and

WHEREAS, Despite the Supreme Court having ruled in favor of the Boy Scouts' freedom to associate with those sharing their moral views and to not associate with those who do not share their moral views, the Boy Scouts have been subjected to a relentless series of attacks by gay-rights organizations, atheist organizations, and politicians and members of the news media who do not respect the right of the BSA to exist; and

WHEREAS, These perverse attacks on an institution revered for nearly a century by virtually all Americans have resulted in some businesses and philanthropic organizations ceasing contributions to the BSA; moreover, pressure brought by homosexual groups nationwide has resulted in some city and county governments and school districts banning Scouts from assembling and associating on public property while, at the same time, allowing homosexual groups, atheist groups, and numerous other groups espousing various creeds to so assemble; and

WHEREAS, The American Legion believes the unrelenting assault against the Boy Scouts is not a unique occurrence but a part of an orchestrated effort to denigrate, damage and systematically destroy traditional American values, as embodied in the Boy Scouts of America, The American Legion, the Flag of the United States, the Pledge of Allegiance, and numerous other embodiments of Americanism; and

WHEREAS, Any attack on the legally held beliefs and right to freely associate with others who hold similar beliefs is an attack on each of us either now or tomorrow, The American Legion – a voluntary association of war veterans who have served their country in an effort to preserve basic freedoms – does recognize its duty to come to the aid of the Boy Scouts of America in order to protect our mutually shared liberties; and

WHEREAS, This resolution has the approval of the National Americanism Commission, which has recommended its adoption to the National Finance Commission and the National Executive Committee; and

WHEREAS, This resolution has the approval of the National Finance Commission, which recommends its adoption to the National Executive Committee; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By the National Executive Committee in regular meeting assembled in Indianapolis, Indiana, on October 8-9, 2003, That The American Legion does gladly accept the privilege and responsibility of defending traditional American values and freedoms by reaffirming its support for the Boy Scouts of America, and by pledging to assist the Boy Scouts of America in filing an amicus brief or briefs, as may be necessary, appropriate, legal, and approved by the National Commander so that the concerted assault on traditional American values and morality, beliefs and standards will ultimately fail; and, be it further

RESOLVED, That the National Executive Committee does authorize The American Legion to file amicus briefs in the case of *Boy Scouts of America v. Nancy Wyman*, when same is appealed to the Supreme Court of the United States, both on the question of certiorari and on the merits, and in such other cases as may be appropriate as determined by the National Commander; and, be it further

RESOLVED, The American Legion does hereby appropriate the initial sum of \$25,000 to fund this effort; and, be it finally

RESOLVED, That the National Commander, after review and approval by the National Judge Advocate, is authorized and directed to execute all appropriate documents concerning this action submitted to him by the National Judge Advocate, and the National Adjutant is hereby authorized and directed to attest the same.

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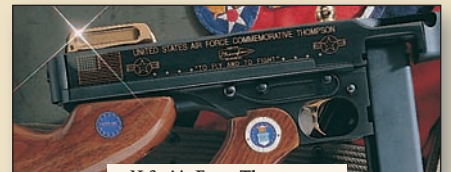
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Former Sen. Bob Dole tells how Americans – young and old – gave from their hearts to honor ‘the greatest generation.’

World War II has long been recognized as the most significant event of the 20th century. Without the sacrifices of those who fought Axis aggression, Americans would not have the freedoms and opportunities they enjoy today.

The National World War II Memorial, established by the American Battle Monuments Commission, is the first national monument honoring what has so often been heralded as “the greatest generation.” The memorial, to be dedicated May 29 on the National Mall in Washington, has a threefold purpose:

- To honor the more than 16 million men and women who served in uniform and the more than 400,000 Americans who died in the war, as well as millions more who supported the effort at home;
- To commemorate the entire nation’s participation in that war; and
- To honor the high moral purpose and idealism that motivated the nation’s call to arms, and to serve as a lasting tribute to the spirit, sacrifice and commitment of the American people to the common defense of the nation and to the broader causes of peace and freedom in the world.

Construction of the memorial, located on a 7.4-acre site between the Lincoln Memorial and the Washington Monument, began in September 2001. The American Battle Monuments Commission expects the memorial to be completed this spring. Dedication Day represents a unique opportunity to honor Americans who, at a critical time in world history, stood united in defense of freedom and democracy. It also represents the culmination of many years of planning, preparation and fund raising.

The fund-raising campaign was led by National Chairman Bob Dole – former Kansas senator and World War II veteran who received two Bronze Stars and two Purple Hearts – and National Co-Chairman Frederick W. Smith, president and CEO of FedEx Corp.

In a recent interview with *The American Legion Magazine*, Dole discussed the importance of honoring “the greatest generation,” plans for the Dedication Day in May and the phenomenal campaign that transformed an idea into a timeless tribute.

The American Legion Magazine: *Who originally came up with the idea for building the National World War II Memorial?*

Bob Dole: Congresswoman Marcy Kaptur (D-Ohio) introduced the first bill. A World War II veteran approached her with the idea of building a World War II memorial, and she followed through. The idea had been discussed about 10 or 15 years before that, but people had said, “We don’t need a memorial. Half the people are dead. Why waste the money?” I do know that The American Legion was instrumental in advancing this project by passing a resolution several years ago promoting the building of a national World War II memorial.

TALM: *Why now? Why wasn’t a memorial built years ago when*

more World War II veterans were still living?

BD: I don’t believe the World War II veterans thought it was necessary. These men and women came back from the war, went to work and raised their families, or went on to school. They went on about the business of life. I imagine if you put it to a vote among World War II veterans today, they’d be rather ambivalent, especially if you’re talking about them being the focus. If you’re talking about the memorial being a symbol of sacrifice for your country, the veterans would be in favor. They know that when America’s young people come to visit the memorial, they’ll realize it represents the sacrifices made by their fathers and mothers, grandparents, uncles, cousins and neighbors so we could all have the freedom we have today.

TALM: *Why do you feel it’s long overdue?*

BD: When I look at it from a veteran’s standpoint, and the standpoint of it symbolizing America’s greatness and what we’ve contributed to advance freedom around the world, then it’s long overdue.

TALM: *What impact did your war experience have on your life, your career and your sponsorship of this memorial?*

BD: Obviously, my war experience had a big impact on what I wanted to do with my life. My military experience caused me to take an interest in veterans benefits and disability issues, Social Security and other issues affecting the veterans themselves and their dependents. If you have an experience in something, it follows that you’ll develop an

"Some protesters formed a group called 'Save the Mall.' My response to 'Save the Mall' was, 'We already saved the Mall in World War II, and we saved everything else in town, too.'"

interest in helping others going through similar experiences.

As far as being involved with the World War II memorial, one reason I decided to help was because I felt strongly about it. I believed in the value of it to the veterans. I knew they were having trouble recruiting someone to do the fund-raising. I'm glad I got involved, because I've met a lot of nice people. For example, I met this 73-year-old man, an Armenian-American from Pennsylvania, who sent us \$1 million. He's not a veteran; he's just grateful for what America has done for him. He told me, "This country's been good to me. I came here with nothing. I want to give something back." We were all shocked to get \$1 million from one person. That was the single largest contribution we received from an individual. The gentleman was here for the groundbreaking and wants to be here again for the dedication. Other than that, he doesn't want anything. That's quite a story.

TALM: *What obstacles did you encounter?*

BD: Building the memorial on the Mall was the biggest obstacle. A lot of people thought we shouldn't build a World War II memorial there because the Mall is considered sacred ground. Some protesters formed a group called "Save the Mall." I doubt more than 20 people were in the group, but they were noisy. My response to "Save the Mall" was, "We already saved the Mall in World War II, and we saved everything else in town, too."

TALM: *How was it resolved?*

BD: Eventually, it went to court. But that's a whole chapter I wasn't involved in. And don't get me wrong – not all objections were bad. We received many good, constructive ideas, includ-

ing modifications to the design. You can't just turn your back and say, "That's it. We're not going to change anything."

My primary job was raising the money, and I had a great guy helping me: Fred Smith. Fred is a Vietnam vet who had five uncles in World War II. Here's a guy who has plenty to do. As the CEO of FedEx, he operates a billion-dollar worldwide business. Yet he had also helped raise money for the Vietnam Memorial in Washington. I remember asking him to help me reach corporate America for the World War II memorial campaign. We both got on the phone and contacted CEOs across America.

TALM: *What is the total estimated cost of the memorial?*

BD: The total cost for the entire project is about \$172 million, but that's everything, not just construction. Naturally, delays, modifications and rising costs added millions of dollars to the final figures. But I can testify to America's greatness with conviction because we're building this memorial with relatively little federal money, only \$16 million. From the beginning, our viewpoint was this: if we can't raise the money, we can't build it. I've had senators saying, "Bob Dole shouldn't be running around the country with a tin cup asking for money. Congress ought to give him the money." I said, "We don't want the government to give us the money. We want that money to go for veterans benefits and to aid their dependents. We'll raise the money for the memorial with the help of our friends, The American Legion and other service groups."

TALM: *Who contributed?*

BD: Donations came from corporations, foundations, the states and Puerto Rico, individual

donors, more than 450 veterans groups and schools across America. The single largest donor was Wal-Mart. The Legion was our third largest contributor. However, most of the contributions came from individuals. When I travel, Legionnaires and other veterans all over the country tell me they've made individual contributions to the memorial. I've noticed a family connection in many of the individual contributions, particularly among daughters and granddaughters of veterans.

You could fill a book with stories about this fund-raising campaign. There are stories about small children holding their grandfathers' hands while dropping their pennies into a collection box. Hundreds of grade-school and high-school kids raised money – in nickels, dimes and quarters – for the memorial. Many service organizations held marathon events, where veterans wheelchaired so many miles to raise money for the cause. It's been quite an experience. The stories are phenomenal. I heard about one fellow who wheelchaired all the way from South Carolina to D.C. to raise \$10,000.

Interestingly, other than Tom Hanks, our national spokesman, and Steven Spielberg, who helped pay for the groundbreaking ceremony, the people who didn't contribute as much as they should were Hollywood executives and celebrities. They make millions of dollars on war movies, but the vast majority didn't contribute anything to the memorial.

TALM: *How much money was raised, and is more needed?*

BD: Thanks to widespread support across America, we have received \$193 million in cash and pledges. I still have people asking to make donations. Even though

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we tell them we no longer need donations, many contribute anyway. These additional donations and funds remaining after all project costs are paid will be held in perpetuity in the National World War II Memorial Trust Fund and will be managed by the American Battle Monuments Commission, solely for the benefit of the World War II Memorial. A couple of years ago, the Korean War Veterans Memorial needed a couple million dollars of repairs. If something like that happens to this memorial, we'll have the money to fix it at no cost to the federal government.

TALM: *What portion of each individual donation actually goes toward construction of the memorial?*

BD: When the project is completed, we expect only about 25 percent to have been spent on what would be considered non-direct project costs, meaning fund-raising and administrative costs. The other 75 percent will be a combination of direct project costs – site selection, design, artwork and construction – and additional money being held in the World War II Memorial Trust Fund.

TALM: *What is there about the memorial that makes you most proud?*

BD: The fact that we raised the money. They kept raising the stakes on us. First, it was going to be a \$100 million memorial. Later, it was a \$150 million memorial. It was discouraging to think you were just about there, and then they'd say, "There's been a revision, and it's going to be several million more than we thought." If you'd ask anyone to be chairman of a committee to raise \$200 million, they'd say you're crazy.

TALM: *Tell me about the dedication in May.*

BD: It's in the preliminary stages, but I know the committee is already working with the White House. Many foreign dignitaries and former presidents want to come. But the important thing is accommodating the World War II veterans and their families. Many will be in wheelchairs and many more will need physical assistance. The dedication planners say they expect tens of thousands of World War II veterans to attend. I think we could have 300,000 to 400,000. It'll take a lot of doing to take care of that

many people. I'm sure Legionnaires from this part of the country are going to take in overnight guests. I haven't seen the detailed Dedication Day plans yet, but I know the planners have all kinds of services in the works to provide food, restroom facilities and first-aid stations to aid the veterans.

TALM: *Why is the ceremony so important?*

BD: Of the 16 million who served in World War II, fewer than 5 million are still living. For those that attend the dedication, it'll be a long-awaited and memorable event.

We want to invite everyone to come. Veterans will be driving to Washington from every corner of this country. They're going to scrape up every dime they have to come to the dedication. It means that much. We hope the children and grandchildren of World War II veterans will help their fathers and grandfathers by giving them plane tickets or pay for their trip so they can attend the dedication. It's going to be a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity for these veterans. 🌿

Article design: Doug Rollison

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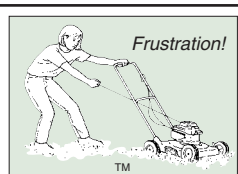
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Tax AMERICANA



*When it comes to government's share,
Americans have decided enough is enough.*

BY DONALD LAMBRO

No issue in American politics ignites more visceral, gut-level anger and frustration than taxes. Taxes prey on our income and savings, punish our businesses and permeate every aspect of our economic life, even into the hereafter.

It is hard to think of a single transaction, product, service or other human endeavor that is not taxed at the federal, state or local level in one way or another. Indeed, America's past 100 years have been marked by government's relentless search for new sources of tax revenues – from telephones to tires, fishing to fuel, liquor to luxuries, marriage to Medicare and dogs to divorce.

Throughout most of our history, America has been a low-tax country. From our founding to the early 1900s, government spending at all levels – except in time of war – rarely climbed above 10 percent of our national income. Indeed, at the beginning of the 20th century, “taxes accounted for 5.7 percent of income,” according to the nonpartisan Tax Foundation. By the end of the century, taxes at every level had shot up to 33 percent of America's income to feed and finance the ever-increasing expansion and growth of government.

When Jimmy Carter left the presidency in 1981 the total yearly federal budget was about \$600 billion. By the time Ronald Reagan left office it had climbed to \$1 trillion. Federal expenditures stood at \$2 trillion when the Clinton administration ended. Today the tab is around \$2.2 trillion and rising rapidly.

Working Americans and businesses produce most of the tax income to pay for all this, though how much they must pay in total federal, state and local taxes, penalties, fees and other levies is rarely, if ever, mentioned by the politicians who enact them, let alone by the media who invariably promote them.

The American Legion Magazine asked the Tax Foundation to take

three hypothetical families of four in different parts of the country with various incomes and compute their total federal, state and local tax burdens, including income taxes, fees, licenses and property taxes. Here are their numbers:

■ In Tennessee, a family of four making \$50,000 a year has a total tax burden of 21.65 percent.

■ In Virginia, a family of four with a household income of \$80,000 a year must shoulder a total tax burden of 32.38 percent.

■ In high-tax California, a family of four with a household income of \$110,000 has a total tax burden of a whopping 41.23 percent.

Another way to measure the nation's tax burden is to figure out how long taxpayers work just to pay all of their taxes before they begin to earn for themselves and their family.

In 1900, you would have had to work for only 20 days to pay all of your taxes. By 1950, that number had jumped to 88 days. By 1980, it was up to 109. By 2000 it was up to 120 days, according to Tax Foundation accountants who each year compute how long Americans must toil to reach “Tax Freedom Day.”

Over the past three years, Tax Freedom Day has been effectively rolled back to 109 days, largely because of the 10-year Bush tax cuts passed in 2001, the acceleration of those cuts in March 2002 and the slowdown in the economy that reduced tax revenues. The total effective tax rate has declined slightly, too, from 32.4 percent to 30 percent.

However, while the federal tax burden has been eased over the past three years, states, counties and localities have been substantially adding to the nation's tax bills with some income-tax hikes – mostly through an avalanche of new or increased fees and a variety of higher sales taxes on tobacco, alcohol, gasoline and other consumer purchases.

Most governors avoided broad-based income taxes because of the negative political impact they triggered at a time of rising job layoffs and economic weak-

ness. But they found that more often than not they could get away with higher government fees that affected smaller constituencies and sparked less political backlash.

More recently, according to the “Fiscal Survey of States: June 2003” – released jointly by the National Governors Association and the National Association of State Budget Officers – most states have called for an even larger number of new taxes and fees.

“Indeed, in their original fiscal 2004 budget proposals, governors in 29 states recommended tax and fee increases, while three proposed revenue decreases and 18 recommended no change, resulting in a net proposed increase of \$17.5 billion,” the fiscal survey reported.

At this writing, there is not an authoritative final accounting of how many fee and tax proposals have been passed for FY 2004. But the survey said that if the proposed increases were enacted, “it would be the largest increase in taxes and fees since this report began collecting such data in 1979.”

The range of fees that are now being levied by government, especially state and local governments, is truly stunning. They number in the thousands when all the taxes, tolls and fees levied by the states, counties and communities are added to the list, state legislative officials say.

Americans pay license fees for dogs, fishing, hunting, divorces, swimming pools, beach use, fuel tanks, gasoline, alcoholic beverages, marriages, wells, vehicles, construction equipment, trailers, septic tanks, food-sale permits, toll roads, bridges, tunnels and hundreds of other things.

“After sales taxes, fees generated the most revenue for the states in 2003,” according to the National Conference of State Legislatures. All told, 30 states raised more than 200 different fees that produced nearly \$2.6 billion in new revenue.

The most common targets in the fee-hike mania were hunting,



fishing, parks and health care. No service escaped notice. North Carolina raised the fee it charged local health departments for processing pap smears. Massachusetts, the king of all state-fee raisers – at more than \$500 million a year – hiked fees it charged at state skating rinks and for taking the bar exam. Minnesota adds a late bar-closing fee.

The pace of new or increased state fees shows no signs of slowing down. The NCSL's 2003 survey noted that "the total amount generated by fees already is nearly three times greater than it was in 2002, which was significantly higher than the \$405 million fee increases in 2001.

One of the major campaign battlegrounds in this year's elections will be about taxes, principally federal taxes.

A growing body of evidence suggests that tax cuts significantly shortened the 2001 recession and have put our economy back on the path to growth and prosperity. Economists say the tax-rate cuts, as well as the per-child tax-credit refunds, have raised incomes, boosted consumer spending, increased business earnings and have begun creating more jobs. Although not all of the figures are in, overall economic growth was expected to run more than 4 percent in the

last six months of 2003 and even higher in 2004.

■ Despite the tax-cut critics, the fact is that whenever tax rates have been cut, economic growth has bounced back, and the unemployment rate has declined.

■ When President Kennedy's proposed tax cuts were enacted in the early 1960s, the lackluster economy shifted into high gear, and by the end of the decade, increased tax revenues led to a balanced budget.

■ When President Reagan cut tax rates in the midst of the 1981-82 recession, the economy recovered so strongly that tax revenues rose by nearly \$400 billion over his presidency. By the time he left office, the once double-digit jobless rate had fallen to nearly 5 percent, which economists consider full employment.

■ When congressional leaders in the House and Senate talked President Clinton into signing a capital-gains tax cut and other tax incentives, the stock markets shot up to record highs, the economy took off and federal revenues skyrocketed, yielding record budget surpluses.

■ Since the Bush tax cuts were accelerated in March 2002, all the economic indicators are up, stock markets have bounced back, jobless claims have fallen, housing sales are setting records, retail

Tax attack

Not one of the following taxes existed 100 years ago, and our nation was the most prosperous of any, had absolutely no national debt and had the largest middle class in the world. What happened?

- Accounts-receivable tax
- Building-permit tax
- Capital-gains tax
- CDL-license tax
- Cigarette tax
- Corporate-income tax
- Dog-license tax
- Federal-income tax
- Federal Unemployment Tax (FUTA)
- Fishing-license tax
- Food-license tax
- Fuel-permit tax
- Gasoline tax
- Hunting-license tax
- Inheritance-tax interest expense (tax on the money)
- Inventory-tax IRS interest charges (tax on top of tax)
- IRS penalties (tax on top of tax)
- Liquor tax
- Local-income tax
- Luxury taxes
- Marriage-license tax
- Medicare tax
- Property tax
- Real-estate tax
- Recreational-vehicle tax
- Road-usage taxes (truckers)
- Sales taxes
- School tax
- Septic-permit tax
- Service-charge taxes
- Social Security tax
- State-income tax
- State Unemployment Tax (SUTA)
- Telephone federal-excise tax
- Telephone federal, state and local surcharge taxes
- Telephone minimum-usage surcharge tax
- Telephone recurring and nonrecurring charges tax
- Telephone state and local tax
- Telephone usage-charge tax
- Toll-bridge taxes
- Toll-tunnel taxes
- Traffic fines (indirect taxation)
- Trailer-registration tax
- Utility taxes
- Vehicle license-registration tax
- Vehicle-sales tax
- Watercraft-registration tax
- Well-permit tax
- Workers-compensation tax

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The impact

A further sampling of the kinds of new state fees proposed in the past year alone:

Alaska. A new public-construction project fee of 1 percent of the total contract for construction projects \$25,000 and greater. Increase most motor-vehicle registration filing fees by \$10 to \$15 per year, and raise title or lien filing fees from \$5 to \$15. New \$15 per-person annual conservation passes for nonresidents older than 16 who use commercial services to view wildlife and do not have a hunting, fishing or trapping license. Raise business license fees from \$25 per year to \$100 per year or to \$50 per year for people who are 55 and older. A new \$2.50 per-wheel retail sales fee for studded tires for highway travel. (If you can't afford it, use nonstudded tires and take your chances on icy winter roads.)

Minnesota. Hike motor vehicle title and license plates fees, traffic fines, storm-water regulatory fees and newborn health-screening fees.

New Jersey. Raise realty-transfer fees from \$1.50 to \$2.75 for property more than \$150,000. Increase the utilities assessment on energy bills. Hike license fees for real-estate agents, brokers, instructors and training schools. Boost construction

fees by 75 cents per \$1,000 of new construction. Higher fees for alcoholic-beverage licenses and permits for retail, social affairs and catering.

New York. Dozens of new or increased service fees, including fingerprinting, industrial discharge, nuclear generation, hospital revenue assessments, home care, vehicle insurance, vital records, property transfers, real estate, new tire sales, parking surcharges, driving records, motor vehicles, attorney registration and gambling.

Oklahoma. Sought to raise its vending-machine fees by \$10 million.

Pennsylvania. Proposed \$29 million in higher fees and licenses.

Rhode Island. Called for increases in its mutual-fund filing fees.

Vermont. Intends to raise its judiciary filing fees.

– D.L.

sales are climbing and consumer confidence is rising again.

Critics take note of the 6-percent jobless rate, always a lagging indicator in an economic slump. But unemployment in Europe, where tax rates are much higher, has been running at nearly 10 percent across the continent for the past two decades or more.

The result: younger Europeans have been leaving in droves for the United States and other economies in search of job opportunities.

While the federal tax burden has been lightened, state and local taxes and other levies – with some exceptions – remain more burdensome than ever, say tax-cutters.

“I would say that the overall tax picture has been a mixed one. There's been some successes. A lot of states have done the right thing and have cut spending and said that they are not going to raise taxes,” said John Berthoud, president of the National Taxpayers Union.

“California Gov. Gray Davis of course was bounced by the voters in a recall because he spent the state deeply into debt and raised taxes to pay for it. And Alabama Gov. Bob Riley tried to push through the biggest tax increase in the state's history in a referendum that was overwhelmingly rejected by the voters.”

What happened in California, Alabama and elsewhere in the country suggests voters are by and large in no mood to raise taxes – especially in an economy in the early stages of recovery.

Davis was only the second governor in U.S. history to be thrown out of office by angry voters. One of the key issues that fueled their anger was Davis' decision to triple the car tax. Riley proposed a massive income tax-rate increase plan that voters shot down, 68 percent to 32 percent.

In Virginia last year, a referendum to push through a sales-tax hike for road building was crushed by anti-tax critics, despite being outspent 10 to 1 by the pro-tax lobby. A Missouri tax-hike referendum also was beaten by the voters, despite the state's reputation for some of the worst roads in the country. Even in liberal-minded Seattle, voters killed a tax on lattes to fund educational programs.

The polls and some pundits keep telling us that Americans oppose tax cuts and wouldn't mind giving up more of their income to pay for bigger government programs, but the evidence in recent years seems to suggest otherwise.

The politicians and the bureaucrats are always asking for more money and warning that critical services will be slashed or

eliminated if they do not get it. Tax-hike supporters in Alabama warned that schools would be closed and even college football would be threatened. But when the tax hikes were voted down and the legislature agreed to cut spending instead, “the sun came up the next day, kids went to school and football games were held just as they always have,” Berthoud said.

In Washington, the feds will take in more than \$2 trillion this year, and even more next year, from working taxpayers and businesses. States and localities will collect billions more, too. Government bureaucrats do not need more taxes – they just need to spend more frugally what we give them.

After paying their income taxes, payroll taxes, estate taxes, capital-gains taxes, business taxes, property taxes, car taxes and gasoline taxes, only to see what's left over fleeced by an unending list of fees, taxpayers are getting fed up. And their message is coming through loud and clear from Alabama to California: “We're taxed out. Enough is enough.” 🍀

Donald Lambro is the chief political correspondent for The Washington Times and a nationally syndicated columnist.

Article design: King Dooxsee

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It's the most popular beverage on earth. One in every three people drinks at least two cups a day. The Japanese drink it from cans purchased in vending machines. Costa Ricans drink it through a flannel cloth. Brazilians drink it from tiny cups. Belgians drink it out of big bowls. Russians sometimes drink it with a slice of lemon, Mexicans with cinnamon, Greeks with cardamom seeds and Salvadorans with allspice. The Italians steam it. The French press it. The Turks grind it to a powder, boil it and drink it "black as hell, strong as death and sweet as love."

It's a commodity. Only petroleum is a more valuable item of legal international trade. Some 100 million bags, the equivalent of a half-trillion cups, are produced every year. Speculators make the price swing wildly, creating fortunes and wiping them out – and, occasionally, toppling governments.

It's a drug. Caffeine is the world's most widely used mood-altering drug, and coffee is its premier delivery system. Though it's associated with relaxation, caffeine is a habit-forming stimulant. Unlike the other two legal drugs of choice, nicotine and alcohol, caffeine is unregulated and available everywhere to everyone, including children.

The use of coffee as food began sometime around 600 B.C. in Abyssinia, now Ethiopia. Legend holds that goatherds noticed their charges behaved excitedly after chewing red coffee berries and decided to try it for them-

selves. The result was bewitching, and soon Abyssinians everywhere were grinding up the beans, mixing the powder with fat and fashioning it into edible balls. It was another 500 years before the Turks began roasting and grinding the beans to use coffee as a beverage. For another 500 years or so, coffee was monopolized by the Arab world, and the details of its growing and brewing were as much a secret as that of Coca-Cola today.

Coffee arrived in Europe in the 17th century, supposedly when the Turks abandoned 500 bags of the beans after giving up their siege of Vienna in 1683. Three years later, Francesco Procopio opened for business in Paris. As cafés sprouted up all over Europe, they became a magnet for political dissidents, who gathered to polish their grievances and hone their opposition tactics. The French Revolution was born in the cafés of Paris. Rulers in England, France and Germany tried to close these hotbeds of sedition and intrigue, but neither coffee nor democracy could be denied.

After a group of American revolutionaries dumped a load of tea from a British ship into Boston Harbor to protest high prices in 1773, coffee drinking became a gesture of defiance against the crown. By the time of the Civil War, coffee was a national addiction. The rations of Union soldiers included a whopping 36 pounds of coffee a year, and some of them carried handy bean grinders in their rifles' butts. In 1900, the United States was consuming half the world's coffee.

By World War I, the Army was requisitioning



Creating a Perfect Cup

29 million pounds of coffee a year – much of poor quality and stale by the time it got to the troops “over there.” The Army recipe didn’t help matters – 5 ounces of coffee for every gallon of water, a concoction so weak that servicemen compared it to dishwater.

By World War II, coffee drinking was a source of interservice rivalry. Marines boasted they could down 20 cups at a single mess hall sitting. For the fox-hole, the Army added instant powder in foil packets to K rations. “Soldiers report that the capsules are easy to handle and the coffee simple to prepare,” *Scientific American* reported in 1943.

For many years, the coffee break has been a fixture in our culture, civilian and military. Some say the coffee break originated at sea to warm up sailors before going on watch. Others say the custom became entrenched during and after World War II. Certainly, the institution is now virtually indestructible. It even has a formally defined time frame: 10 minutes to a half hour.

Today, North Americans consume an average of 10 pounds of coffee a year, little more than a cup a day at 40 cups to the pound. Eliminate the kids and abstainers – about a third of the

A debate rages over the finer points of making coffee – roasting, grinding, brewing – and if all the world’s coffee experts were laid end to end, they wouldn’t reach a conclusion. Nevertheless, there is a consensus on some general points:

- Use only high-quality, recently roasted Arabica beans, and grind them just before brewing.
- Use only pure, cold water.
- Use two tablespoons of ground coffee for every 6 ounces of water.
- When it’s finished, move it to a thermos; do not leave it on heat.
- Drink it immediately or very soon.
- Whatever the brewing equipment, keep it scrupulously clean and free of residues.

The method preferred by most experts is the French Chambord, or press pot. The water should be heated to just under a boil and kept in contact with the ground beans for about five minutes.

Espresso? It’s a whole art unto itself, and the best way to get a great cup is to go to a good coffeehouse.

population – and you get closer to the real intake of about 14 pounds a year per person. That works out to 560 cups a year, almost two a day, and that’s still only for casual drinkers. Some drinkers committed to coffee have been logged at 50 cups a day, and those are just the ones still around to talk about their habit.

But what of it? For 1,000 years or more, coffee has connected clear thinkers and provided pleasure, jobs and stimulation

all over the world. And today a golden age of coffee seems at hand. Specialty coffees have awakened an international taste for quality coffee. From Hong Kong to Chicago, people who once didn’t know the difference between a fresh-roasted bean and an instant powder are stepping up and asking for a Guatemalan latte, light on the milk, please. Not bad for a beverage that has no nutritional value and a bitter taste that must be acquired. ☘

William Ecenbarger is an award-winning journalist and author of “Walkin’ the Line: A Journey From Past to Present Along the Mason-Dixon” (M. Evans & Co., 2000).

Article design: Holly K. Soria

A Matter of Trust



At a time of strained relations over VA health care, last summer's proposal to shut down seven hospitals across the country led many veterans to believe 'it's all about the money.'

BY JEFF STOFFER

September 1966. A fire-team leader who grew up delivering newspapers in the western Pennsylvania suburbs squats shoulder-to-shoulder with a fellow member of the 2nd Battalion, 9th Marines – men casually known as “hell in a helmet.” James H. Joyce of Penn Hills, Pa., remembers that just 10 months earlier, he turned 20 on his deployment flight to Vietnam and that he was told to get ready because he was landing in the “blood bucket.” He quickly found out just what that meant.

Outside Hue Phu Bai, the two young Marines pass binoculars back and forth, trying to detect enemy movement in the village about 500 yards away. The men are frustrated. They have orders not to enter the village, due to the presence of royal tombs. A shot is fired. “That one was close,” Joyce exclaims. He gets no response. His buddy is slumped over. Blood is squirting from a pencil-thick hole behind his ear. By the time he is evacuated, the man is drowning in his own blood, and Joyce must summon everything inside him to convert fear into anger, an emotion he can use in battle. He believes that’s his best chance of survival.

More than 35 years later, the image of that afternoon in I Corps, and many like it, remains vivid. The footage plays and replays in the theatre of his mind – bringing tears to his eyes, denying psychological discharge from the war that permanently changed him.

But post-traumatic stress disorder is not what’s bothering James Joyce right now, at age 58. Right now, the burly veteran is worried that the VA health-care facility responsible for saving his sanity will be taken away. He is worried that, for the second time in his life, he is about to feel betrayed by the government he swore to defend. He has his reasons for feeling this way, for wanting the Highland Drive division of the Pittsburgh VA Healthcare System to stay open. His reasons go beyond money. For him, it’s a matter of trust.



The announcement arrived at a sensitive moment for veterans in Canandaigua, N.Y. The community’s first soldier killed in Operation Iraqi Freedom was freshly buried, with full military honors. The next day, the list of proposed CARES casualties – hospitals lined up for execution under VA’s controversial Capital Asset Realignment for Enhanced Services process – was released. Included on the list was Canandaigua VA Medical Center, which had been serving veterans in upstate New York for more than 60 years. Rebellion came almost instantly. The Coalition to Save the Canandaigua VA Hospital took shape, and more than 90,000 signatures were swiftly collected onto a petition against the plan. More than 2,000 people

attended a “Save the VA” rally. The city, the county and the schools got involved. Web sites popped up. Veterans were wheeled out at halftime of a high-school football game. Buttons were made that said, “Keep The Promise. Keep It Open. Save the VA.” They had a candlelight vigil and a motor-cycle rally. A logo was designed connecting the Canandaigua campaign with the other six communities where facilities were recommended for closure under CARES. The rallying cry: “7 Cities Solidarity: United to Save Our VAs.” Congressional representatives poured into town, stood before veterans and promised to intervene.

Coming so soon after \$1.8 billion in earlier-approved funding was stripped from last year’s congressional budget request for VA health care, the CARES draft plan landed at a particularly tense moment in the often-rocky relationship between

U.S. military veterans and the Department of Veterans Affairs. A half-year earlier, some 236,000 veterans were waiting six months or longer to see over-booked VA doctors in under-staffed facilities throughout the country. VA Secretary Anthony Principi responded to the pesky backlog of patients by restricting enrollment to only the sickest and poorest among them, an administrative retreat from the congressionally approved Veterans Health Care Eligibility Reform Act of 1996, which had opened VA care to all who honorably served. The CARES draft plan also hit at a time when veterans were seeing more and more of America’s sons and daughters coming home sick, wounded or dead from war in the Middle East. In the eyes of the returning soldiers, they saw themselves and a new generation of VA patients.

“The VA picked a very, very bad time to pick on veterans,” says Bill Mahon of Waco, Texas,

Vietnam War veteran James Joyce of Penn Hills, Pa., opposite, won’t let the Highland Drive VA health-care facility in Pittsburgh go down without a fight. **Jeff Stoffer**

a disabled Army retiree who fought in the Vietnam War and today fights to keep the VA hospital in his community open.

The CARES process recommended new missions for 23 VA health-care facilities from coast to coast. For seven of those – Canandaigua; Waco; Brecksville, Ohio; Lexington, Ky.; Gulfport, Miss.; Livermore, Calif.; and the Highland Drive division of the Pitts-

burg VA Healthcare System – the recommended new mission was to pack it in. Veterans in targeted communities were shocked into action. Not only were they emotionally charged over the prospect of losing their VA hospitals, but they also believed the CARES plan revealed a glimpse of something bigger. A long-hazy federal vision for the future of VA health care was coming into focus – a smaller, cheaper, more consolidated system with capped enrollment and increased dependence on the private sector. “It’s not about veterans anymore,” says Vietnam War veteran Bob Sloma of Pittsburgh. “It’s all about the money.”

‘It’s not about veterans anymore. It’s all about the money.’

– Vietnam War veteran Bob Sloma, Pittsburgh

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Waco was flat-out aghast. Veterans there could not believe VA intended to board up its stately 70-year-old hospital after having spent millions on recent improvements. Waco was not pegged for closure when regional market plans were submitted to the VA national headquarters in Washington last spring. Many in the central Texas city of about 125,000 claim they were told the facility was actually in line for *expansion* through CARES, that it was to become a regional “psychiatric center of excellence.” Mahon says Waco was getting ready for growth. “We felt good,” he recalls. “We had three new buildings being built, all state of the art.”

But at some point last summer, the word “expansion” was scratched out, and “extinction” took its place. Veterans angrily

protested. They summoned the state’s chapter of Rolling Thunder, which led a mid-August motorcycle rally to Crawford, Texas, within earshot of President George W. Bush’s ranch home. The demonstration received national media coverage, ignited the community and opened the floodgates of a public-relations disaster for VA. More than 2,000 gathered on a Waco football field to howl in opposition. Nearly that many showed up when members of the National CARES Commission came to Texas for a field hearing in October. The mayor got behind the effort and assembled a blue-ribbon task force of community leaders to fight for the hospital, which provides about 800 jobs and produces an estimated \$203 million a year in the local economy. Waco media covered the story relentlessly. The editorial page in the daily newspaper warned that “in the snap of fingers, the closing of the VA hospital would usher in an instant mental-health crisis in our community ... A lot of the VA psychiatric outpatients in this community aren’t the kind who will be uprooted, or at least not without great trauma. They will remain here, and they will be Waco’s problem under this proposal.”

At Livermore, Calif., a similar story played out. When the initial regional VISN (Veterans Integrated Service Network) market plans were submitted last spring, the Livermore facility – a 120-bed nursing home with a brand-new state-of-the-art Alzheimer’s/dementia unit, a short-stay subacute care hospital, and a diverse collection of outpatient services – was not mentioned. That all changed suddenly, however, after regional VISN directors were asked by the national office to go back and rethink their first impulses. Veterans advocates in central California say Livermore

– where wild turkeys and black-tailed deer calmly wander 113 acres of vineyard-surrounded grounds – was hoisted up for sacrifice by top VA officials in Washington. First, Livermore was eyed to become an 8-to-5, five-days-a-week operation. But that wouldn’t work because nursing-home care, by definition, certainly cannot be provided on an outpatient basis. All the nursing-

home residents would have to be relocated. So Livermore was recommended for closure instead. Long-term care patients would

be sent to facilities in the Bay Area or farmed out to the private sector. Two new clinics would need to open to handle the outpatient load. The idea, lacking any cost-benefit analysis at the time, did not go over well with local veterans.

“This is a bunch of crap,” says American Legion District Service Officer Barney LaRue, a Korean War veteran who has served as a volunteer for more than 28 years at the Livermore VA. “We need every VA facility that we have. And even then it’s not going to take care of all the veterans that we’ve got. This has gotten under my skin. It will be under my skin until I know they are listening.”



January 1967. James Joyce comes home from Vietnam, but he is not alone. He doesn’t know what it is, but something inside him makes an arm, a foot or his neck randomly swell up, sometimes nearly double. The pain is excruciating. The swelling hits and runs, driving him to rage. The first four years of his new marriage to wife Judy are spent in and out of hospitals. Finally, he is diagnosed at the National Institutes of Health in Bethesda, Md., and discovers he is host to a thing called gnathosomiasis, a parasite he picked up from eating undercooked fish with the popular forces in Vietnam.

Joyce’s civilian job at a cement plant requires heavy-equipment operation, but his muscles are rendered useless during the



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parasite's outbreaks. Medical appointments take him out of work. He fears he will be fired. He files a VA disability claim.

Twenty-seven months pass, and nothing happens. Angry, he goes to a local TV news station. He remembers the embarrassment. "I took off my coat and showed her my arm. She said, 'I'm getting a cameraman.'" His bloated arm on the evening news leads to a 30-percent VA disability rating within two days. He goes downtown to fill out the paperwork. "I was told at the federal building that I was being greedy."

The pain does not go away. He wants to put Vietnam behind him, but the little piece of it that lives under his skin keeps triggering the images that rob him of sleep. He medicates himself. "I drank to block it out and to kill the pain," he says. "It was very painful ... I had to do something. Because of the parasite, it (post-traumatic stress disorder) was already started. Images drifted into my head, and I had recurring dreams. I would wake up and not know where I was. I kept re-enlisting in the Marine Corps and going back to Vietnam. When I woke up, it would take 10 minutes or so before I realized where I was. I had read about PTSD, but I'm a Marine, and I thought that wouldn't be something a Marine would get."

And so he endures, unaware that any Marine who saw action in Vietnam – any combat veteran, for that matter – can get PTSD.

So bitter over the way his VA claim was handled, he throws his Marine uniforms in the garbage. The parasite shares his body for more than 20 years, and there is little he can do to fight it.



Like Waco, Highland Drive's primary mission is mental health care. Set on a bucolic 168-acre campus in the East Liberty section of Pittsburgh, the sprawling 1950-built facility has an indoor swimming pool, a softball field, a domiciliary, a huge laundry facility, a nationally acclaimed wheelchair-research laboratory, and a system of

underground corridors that connects many of the 17 buildings. But little more than half of the 850,000 square feet available is used for patient care.

"It's costing millions of dollars a year to try to renovate it and keep it up to date, because it's old, and there are significant portions of it that are vacant," says Michael Moreland, director of the three-campus system that consists, generally, of a mental-health arm at Highland Drive, a newly rebuilt nursing home at nearby Aspinwall, and the acute-care hospital on University Drive downtown. The three campuses are within seven miles of each other. Nearly \$13 million went into an addition finished last year

to meet rising patient loads at the downtown medical center, adjacent to the University of Pittsburgh's medical school. The University Drive hospital is a busy, congested place where the line for valet parking routinely stretches a half-mile or more. University Drive would pick up Highland Drive's psychiatric inpatient load under the CARES proposal. Local veterans do not see how they would fit.

"If I had to close one of the three, it would be Highland Drive," Moreland says. The average daily bed census at the psychiatric-intensive facility – which before 1996 also provided acute medical care – has fallen from 190.5 patients in 2000 to



Joyce McDuffie, the 75-year-old mother of a Waco VA hospital patient, ran her petition drive "like a business" and filled notebooks with the signatures of thousands of Texans who don't want the hospital closed.

Jeff Stoffer

Mother on a mission

Waco woman fights to keep son's VA hospital open.

Veterans in Waco, Texas, could not have hand-picked a more impassioned ally than 75-year-old Joyce McDuffie. The feisty, white-haired mother of a mentally ill Navy veteran spent about six weeks collecting 6,974 names for a petition opposing the closure of her son's VA hospital in Waco. "I simply ran it like a business," she says of the campaign. "I called all day and told them who I was and what I wanted, and they let me put out the

petitions, and people signed them. Some people came to my home to pick up petitions. Word got around."

McDuffie's 47-year-old son, Kerry, has been a Waco VA patient since 1978, about a year after he was discharged from the Navy. She left her job in Houston that year and moved into a trailer court in Waco to be near him and the hospital. She brings cupcakes and stocking caps to the patients during the holidays. "I have to make sure

162.8 in 2003, a shift the director says can be attributed to a number of factors, including pharmaceutical advances and new outpatient-care choices that reduce the need for long inpatient stays. "The actual number of patients who need care there is going down," Moreland says.

Highland Drive registered nurse Colleen Evans, chief steward of the American Federation of Government Employees local, says the census decline has been artificially manufactured. She believes the declining bed count is an administrative ruse, the goal of which is to show a lack of demand to justify closing it, mitigating the burden of paying for mental health care in

the system. She believes this has been going on for a long time. In July 2002, she testified before the Senate Veterans Affairs Committee that the trend of cutting VA's inpatient psychiatric beds and putting more mentally ill veterans into outpatient programs was a grave, budget-driven disservice. "The veterans at my facility are among roughly 455,000 veterans who suffer from a mental illness which the VA has determined to be service-connected," she told the committee. "For these veterans, the psychological wounds are very real, raw and ever-present. Every day, I see the courage of veterans with serious mental illness trying to stay connected to reality and to have

a clear mind ... As advocates of our patients, the staff is angered, frustrated and deeply saddened by the changes in the level of care and access to care that we have witnessed for this vulnerable segment of the veteran population."

Mary Ann Meader – a Highland Drive nurse, AFGE local vice president and Vietnam-era Army veteran – believes patients have been deliberately squeezed out of the system to make closure more attractive. "There seems to be a concerted effort to divert patients. Patients have been put out and units have closed (behind them). There's no place for them to come back to. We can't take them. They have to go someplace else. Sometimes there isn't a someplace else. Sometimes they have even been sent out of state."

Meader says that when the inpatient count or length-of-stay averages begin to climb too high at Highland Drive, patients are rotated out. "The census waxes and wanes," she says. "When our census is high is when everybody is admitted to other facilities. It happens at least every couple of months." Psychiatric patients are sometimes transferred to the medical center downtown or to the nursing home at Aspinwall and then prematurely discharged from the system altogether, she says. "If they are homeless, they are given the number of a shelter to go to."

Linda Keith, former commandant of a VA-supported state nursing home adjacent to Highland Drive, says admissions of state patients into the federal facility became increasingly difficult over the three years she worked there. "It just got worse and worse to get patients admitted," she says. "It got to the point where I had to actually call people to get them in. At the end, it didn't matter what I did. I felt like they were getting orders from above."

In her July 2002 testimony before the Senate committee, Evans said that psychiatric patients sent to the medical center downtown often came

he's got what he needs," she says. "He's doing great right now. He can communicate with you. He likes to go out to eat. He comes home on weekends."

She credits much of her son's progress to pharmaceutical advances, but she says, "if you take him off his medicine, he's wild and can't eat." She says he is able to live in a residential care program as long as he can make twice-weekly visits to the VA hospital for treatment. Sometimes he is admitted for longer durations, as was the case in 1986 after he disappeared from a private residential-care provider.

"After 21 days, I'm nuts," McDuffie remembers. Her family put up flyers, assembled a posse, posted a reward, and finally a cattle rancher found Kerry at an abandoned house. He was hungry, thirsty, in desperate need of medicine, wearing only a pair of shorts. He was covered with bug bites, his mother recalls. His legs were gashed and so swollen, she says, "he lost the soles of his feet."

So she is wary of private-sector care, especially without a VA hospital nearby to provide support. "We have to have a hospital where they can go

when they need it. We need a place for all veterans, where they can be treated equally."

The origin of her son's condition remains a mystery to McDuffie, who has had two strokes, back and hip operations and uses a hearing aid. "He was a smart kid when he went in, a sweet kid," she says. "He had a girlfriend. I sent a good kid in and got a sick kid back." She says she lost communication with him while he was in the Navy, until he turned up at Balboa Naval Hospital in San Diego. From there, she was able to get him transferred to Houston and then to Waco, where they relocated.

At her age and health condition, she was deeply worried that last summer's CARES (Capital Asset Realignment for Enhanced Services) recommendations would lead to another relocation, 40 miles away at Temple. "There's no way I can go any farther than he is now," she says. "I can't drive."

And she can't bear the thought of a major change for her son and his fellow patients at the Waco VA.

"He can't fight for himself," she says. "Who do you think is going to do it for him? Me."

– J.S.

back to Highland Drive under-treated, and some did not come back at all. "These patients may be confused, acting out, having active hallucinations, combative, extremely difficult. The VA University Drive medical center lacks the staff and seclusion or observation rooms that would allow these patients to be sepa-

If approved, he adds, such a project would be finished in about 2011. If rejected, he says, "We stay at Highland Drive."

Moreland calculates that the consolidation investment would pay for itself in about six years. "New space is cheaper to maintain than old space," he says. "If you built it in the 1950s, by

very clear," he explains. "Fund it all, do it right, or keep doing business as we've been doing it. My big worry is that somebody somewhere, despite all good intentions and despite all promises, will say, 'In a few years we will give you \$60 million, and we'll do it half-baked.'"

The CARES draft plan released last fall did not attach a dollar figure to any plans for Highland Drive's realignment. It simply said the patients "will be transferred to University Drive and

'It is criminal what is happening to these patients. It's terrible because now the patient mix has become dangerous. It has become non-therapeutic at all three sites.'

— Colleen Evans, Highland Drive registered nurse

rated out ... and treated without risk to themselves or others." She testified that at times Highland Drive patients were refused hospital admission, and "the saddest scenario involves those patients we send over for acute medical care but cannot accept back in our facility due to our lack of medical capability."

That, she says, is what led to the inpatient census decline at Highland Drive.

"It is criminal what is happening to these patients," Evans says. "It's terrible because now the patient mix has become dangerous. It has become non-therapeutic at all three sites. We have a lot of assaultive patients that are now over in the dementia unit at Aspinwall, beating up other poor dementia patients."

The CARES deal won't work, Moreland says, unless \$100 million in federal money is delivered to expand the downtown hospital, build a new parking structure and make more room at the Aspinwall nursing home. "You cannot fit what is at Highland Drive into the other two," Moreland says. "So when I put the proposal forward, it was very clearly stated and unanimously supported by our work group, that you cannot close Highland Drive unless there are new buildings and new space constructed and ready to occupy. We have identified the square footage we would need. We have identified a reasonable cost for that. As a planning figure, it's \$100 million."

definition, it's old space. Building new is significantly cheaper." Savings realized from losing Highland Drive's operating costs, he says, would be plowed back into patient care. "There was never an intention to cut money and not improve services."

Dr. Jeff Peters, a psychologist and the system's vice president of behavior-health services, agrees that the Highland Drive consolidation will improve veteran care. "Do you want your health-care dollars to go to a beautiful ballfield and grounds that we don't use, or do you want that money spent on nurses' salaries and medications? Although I know change is very difficult for many people, and folks for all sorts of good reasons are attached to this place, my bias is there is more to be gained than lost. This place was built for a purpose that no longer exists. This place was built for the care of the psychiatric patient in 1950. It was built to house thousands of people who needed longterm institutional inpatient care because that was the state of the art. That was the best we could provide. In that era, campuses like this were expected to look like this. People would spend the vast majority of the rest of their lives living (as inpatients). Times have changed."

Like Moreland, Peters says everything hinges on the \$100 million for new construction. "My issue with this plan is

Aspinwall campuses, with new facilities for psychiatry, mental health, and related research and administrative services."

"The idea is to get the money into the pipeline," says U.S. Rep. Tim Murphy, R-Pa. "We can't house patients on promises. The bottom line for me is that we get what's best for veterans. We have to continue to push that. If a facility is old and worn and incapable, we have to replace it. Whatever is done, it has to provide comprehensive quality and accessible service."

The estimated cost of the CARES overhaul, which also includes new medical centers in Las Vegas and Orlando, Fla., is estimated at \$4.6 billion.

Bob Sloma – who fought the Viet Cong in Vietnam and now works as a safety specialist for the Pittsburgh VA Healthcare System – doubts the money will materialize.

"What new facility?" he asks.

Sloma fears Pittsburgh will end up like Chicago, where the CARES process was piloted in 2001. A private consulting firm there recommended closing the city's Lakeside VA Medical Center, turning it into a clinic and feeding its inpatient veterans into Westside VA Medical Center 10 miles away. The measure would require \$100 million for a new bed tower at Westside. VA concurred. Lakeside was closed. Patients were moved to other facilities in the city. But that transition, says Chicago Ameri-



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When the news hit that Waco was in line to lose its VA health-care facility, Rolling Thunder led a motorcycle rally to Crawford, Texas, near the ranch home of President George W. Bush. *Courtesy Waco Tribune-Herald*

can Legion Department Service Officer Joe Petrosky, “was messy,” because the promised new bed tower was nowhere in sight when acute-care services disappeared at Lakeside. “Nobody knew what was going to happen,” Petrosky says. “It’s been a disaster. We don’t even have the plans yet.”

Veterans in Chicago were enraged. “They went nuts, to put it lightly,” Petrosky says. “Veterans were going to town-hall meetings, expressing their concerns, and there were petitions – organized efforts – but everything that was said fell on deaf ears. The VA kept saying it’s going to be transparent; you won’t even notice the difference. But it has made a difference. It hurt in Chicago, and we’re seeing it in the rest of the state. The access just isn’t there.”

“Back in the 1930s, there was a need to serve veterans,” Sloma says. “That need has not changed at all. VA was not created to be an HMO. VA was not created to save money. It was not created to apportion out to the private sector. It was made to serve veterans. Veterans should be the priority in all instances. These people are forgetting all too soon the promise made years ago, the promise to take care of veterans.

It started with Lincoln. What they are doing today is a travesty. It’s a disgrace to this country.”

Indeed, Lincoln’s words from March 4, 1865 – “To care for him who shall have borne the battle and for his widow and orphan...” – are often quoted in this time of struggle between veterans and VA. The mantra, engraved on a plaque at the front entrance of VA headquarters in Washington, does not suggest that care for men and women sent to war is the responsibility of anyone other than the same U.S. government that issued their boots and uniforms. It is not a responsibility meant to be fulfilled as an act of budgetary willingness, not a debt to be retired in the uneven marketplace of the private sector. It is the responsibility of the Department of Veterans Affairs to fairly distribute that care, with reasonable quality and timely access. But when the government tweaks one or the other – quality or access – in order to protect the budget, veterans call it a broken promise. And they become angry.

“You send these young men to a Vietnam or an Iraq or wherever, and they come back, and they are never the same,” Meader says. “And the government doesn’t want to take care of

them. It seems like everything they have done to cut costs directly impacts the veteran.”

“It’s all smoke and mirrors,” adds Robert Brenner Jr., director of Pittsburgh’s Coalition of Veterans Advocates, a group that opposes the Highland Drive closure. “Veterans are giving up on the VA.”



Late June 1998. Thirty years have passed since James Joyce came home from the war. Nearly 10 years have gone by since the parasite withdrew, of its own accord. “I was lucky,” he says. “It could have migrated to my internal organs or my brain.”

But the damage is done.

When a horrific storm blows through the Pittsburgh area, with winds that hit 85 mph, power is knocked out on Joyce’s street for a week. He is forced to use candles, just like they did in the rear-area hooches back in Vietnam. “I went into a really deep depression,” he says. “I was drinking heavy that week. The Fourth of July came and still no power, but there were fireworks. On July 5, my wife asked a simple question, and I just snapped at her. I thought, ‘She doesn’t deserve this.’ So I told her I was going to go to the VA to get help with my alcohol problem. I drove up there in bad shape. My face was quivering. I would say I was having a mental breakdown. They got a doctor right away, and a counselor, and the counselor said, ‘You may have an alcohol problem, but you are showing classic symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder.’ I said, ‘I don’t know what’s wrong with me, but I am (messed) up.’”



The CARES process was triggered by a 1999 General Accounting Office report that estimated VA was spending \$1 million a day on under-utilized buildings nationwide. The largest managed health-care system in America, VA operates 163 hospitals, 850 clinics, 137 nursing homes, 43 domiciliaries and 73 home-care pro-

grams. Health care consumes nearly half of VA's \$60 billion annual budget, making it second only to the Department of Defense in federal spending. If indeed \$365 million were spent on wasted space in 1999, the problem represented 2.1 percent of what was then a \$17 billion health-care budget. And yet, it was the problem that launched CARES, the most massive overhaul in the VA health-care system since the troops came home from World War II.

"They didn't care about \$1 million a day when they carted our asses off to war," grumbles Mahon, American Legion Post 121 commander in Waco, a veteran whose trust in the system has been tested for years because he has been forced to pay for his own 80-percent VA disability compensation in forfeited military retirement pay, due to the century-old "disabled veterans tax," a law that denies concurrent receipt of VA disability compensation and DoD retirement pay.

"The people who are getting screwed over are the kind of

people who walked the Bataan peninsula," Mahon says. "These are people who deserve to be treated. Not one of them asked to be here. Not one of them volunteered to spend their lives attached to a VA hospital."

In the years since the GAO report was released, the portrait of VA health care has changed dramatically. Demand, for instance, soared from about 3 million enrolled veterans to approximately 7 million today. After the eligibility reform act was passed in 1996, VA advertised and had health fairs, promoting its services to previously ineligible, or unaware, veterans. The spike in patient numbers that resulted, however, was not matched by commensurate increases in funding. VA was compelled to stop marketing itself. Waiting lists ballooned. At one point, more than 312,000 veterans were on waiting lists that ran six months or longer to see primary care doctors. It was a wreck.

Geopolitical events complicated the situation. The attacks

of Sept. 11, 2001, sent American troops back to war, and they've been there ever since. Operation Iraqi Freedom began to produce casualties, hundreds of new patients for the system, with no end in sight. As the nation's civil-defense backup in case of natural disaster or enemy attack

'They didn't care about \$1 million a day when they carted our asses off to war.'

— Bill Mahon, Vietnam war veteran and American Legion Post 121 commander in Waco

on U.S. soil, VA hospitals were asked to prepare for the worst while the gap between patient numbers and funding continued to widen. One VA hospital in Florida had a waiting list of more than 14,000 veterans. And there was the jarring case of Sgt. Vanessa Turner, who nearly died from wounds she received in Iraq last year, but was told she would have to wait several weeks to see a VA doctor at a backlog-choked facility in Massachusetts. It took interven-

CARES Commission extends deadline

The 15-member independent federal commission tasked with providing VA Secretary Anthony Principi recommendations on the realignment of 23 veterans' health-care facilities across the country announced in mid-December that it needed more time before submitting a final proposal.

The National Capital Asset Realignment for Enhanced Services Commission's executive director, Richard Larson, told The Associated Press that "this is an extraordinarily important initiative that potentially affects the lives of millions of people and we really want to make sure we do the best possible job."

Principi was expected to adopt or reject the commission's final plan, in its entirety, in December. However, at a meeting Dec. 18 in Washington, the commissioners announced the plan would not be available until at least the first week of February.

VA's National CARES Draft Plan released in August 2003 led to hundreds of thousands of

letters, protests and rallies throughout the country because seven VA facilities were earmarked for closure.

The CARES commission conducted 38 field hearings late last year in order to weigh the consequences of the \$4.6 billion realignment package that also included new missions for 16 VA facilities in addition to those recommended for closure. The plan also included opening new hospitals in Las Vegas and Orlando, Fla.

The national draft plan led to at least two attempts by Congress to step in – including proposals to require congressional review periods before any CARES action could take place, and an amendment to VA's appropriations bill that would have barred the advancement of any project without further study into the consequences on mental-health, domiciliary and long-term care needs of veterans in affected areas. The plan anticipates peak demand for VA care in 2012.

— J.S.

tion by Sen. Edward Kennedy, D-Mass., to get her to the doctor. As more servicemen and women came home, the troubles grew more acute and more public.

Early in 2003, VA revised its priorities, suspending new enrollment of veterans classified in the newly created "Priority Group 8" – those with annual

Director Elizabeth Freeman, who presides over Livermore, says there is no major problem with unused or under-utilized buildings at the facility, nestled in the hills of fast-rising real-estate values between the Bay Area and the Central Valley.

"No," she says, when asked if there's much wasted space. "Not

surprised that it came at such a late date. I was surprised it wasn't included at the beginning."

"This came out of the blue," says Alan Lennox, adjutant of American Legion Post 108 in Sutter Creek, Calif., and general manager of a 60-employee Legion-operated ambulance service that contracts for three

counties in the Sierra-Nevada foothills and routinely takes patients to Livermore. "I think they were setting us up. In the past couple of years they have opened

a couple of clinics in areas where the clinics were necessary, but I see that as throwing us a carrot when they were going to take the stick out from underneath us.

The Livermore hospital is strategically located in northcentral California. It sits between the Reno VA, which is over the mountains in the state of Nevada – very difficult to access for local veterans – and Palo Alto, in the heart of the major metropolitan Bay Area. The freeways – the crowded conditions in the Bay Area – make access extremely difficult. Livermore fills that void. It is accessible. It's very accessible to the north valley. It has outpatient care, Alzheimer's care, inpatient nursing home. It's an outstanding facility."

U.S. Rep. Ellen Tauscher, D-Calif., wanted to know why VA could not produce a cost-benefit analysis related to Livermore's proposed closure and consolidation. When she called for a town-hall meeting at the Livermore VA campus, she wanted to see how much money was going to be saved by sending veteran patients to Palo Alto and Menlo Park, and to private-sector facilities that may or may not accept government rates. She wanted to know how they intended to pay for the two new CBOCs.

She said VA could not provide those answers. "They don't have a plan that passes the test of careful analysis," Tauscher concluded. "In the absence of a commitment by the administration to build these new facilities,

'They don't have a plan that passes the test of careful analysis ... this is all just a waste of time.'

– Rep. Ellen Tauscher, D-Calif.

incomes of about \$25,000 or more and no service-connected disabilities. With them out of the way, new patient enrollments fell by half or more at many facilities, and last summer, VA sent out a news release trumpeting its success at reducing the patient backlog. The release offered no indication that Group 8s – those most likely to carry VA-collectible health insurance – would ever be invited back.

As the 21st century dawned, VA's health-care system was well along in its evolution to decentralize from a hospital-intensive inpatient model to an outpatient primary-care model. Community-based outpatient clinics (CBOCs) sprang up across the country to deliver care in smaller doses, generally 8 to 5, five days a week, at more locations. That shift, according to the introduction of the CARES draft plan released last August, came with a fiscal flipside. "While making strong progress in refining primary care modalities and expanding access through investments in (CBOCs), VA had limited success in securing capital to maintain its acute-care infrastructure." Translation: money normally spent on hospitals went into new clinics.

Since CARES was based on improving quality by reducing infrastructure cost, veterans in California could not understand why Livermore – where some \$35 million was spent on capital improvements in the 1990s – was blacklisted.

Palo Alto VA Healthcare System

on this campus ... There is some vacant space within Buildings 64 and 62, and there are some buildings on this site, like the old quarters when you drive up the front drive, that we would like to demolish. And they are on our count, as far as space. But they are abandoned buildings that we just haven't had the money to demolish."

They are not costing a lot of money, then? "No, no, no. They are not maintained."

What about recent capital improvements? "We have put significant (resources) into what we call non-recurring maintenance and minor improvement dollars into maintaining the infrastructure at the Livermore campus. About \$8 million. I believe we are projecting over the same time period probably another \$10 million."

What about the patient census? Is it in decline? "No. We don't have a waiting list, but we turn over the beds frequently."

So, occupancy is good? "Yes."

Occupancy, efficiency and lack of wasted space notwithstanding, CARES opened a window of opportunity for Livermore. "It's not about savings," Freeman says. "It's about the location of some of these historic facilities, such as a Livermore. Is it the right location for veterans in the next 20 years? Is now a time that we could make a shift from this location to other locations? ... All the plans had so much growth in them but not much consolidation. Was I surprised at Livermore? I was

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this is all just a waste of time.”

Freeman says savings would be generated from reduced maintenance costs. “The problem with Livermore, in looking at maintaining this facility in the next 20 years, is the main hospital was constructed in 1929 and expanded in the 1940s. So it has a very aged infrastructure. When you cost out the maintenance of this entire campus over the next 20 years, that’s where you find cost savings over the long term. I am confident that when we are looking at a 20-year view, our preferred alternative is the right thing to do. Having long-term care services at Menlo Park, seven miles from our tertiary-care facility at Palo Alto, will have many benefits for long-term care residents that they don’t receive here.”

Victor Allyn, president of the AFGE local, says VA can count on losing staff in the event of closure and consolidation. “If they close this facility, you have 300-plus employees, some of whom will possibly get the opportunity to go to one of the two clinics, if and when they build them, which is going to cost millions. And if a licensed-practical nurse has to go out to the valley, they will lose between \$3,000 and \$4,000 a year in salaries.” Allyn says two registered nurses left the Livermore VA inside of a month last fall because “they didn’t believe there was any future here. I am surprised we are keeping the RNs we have.”

“We can’t get into the (Palo Alto) VA *now* in a timely manner,” says Floyd Martin, a veterans service officer for nearby Amador County. “We have VA doctors and nurses who are not going to commute or relocate to Palo Alto. What happens to them? We already have a problem keeping doctors and nurses. They’re going to go to the private sector.”



Barney LaRue, left, and Floyd Martin say they are willing to “fight like hell” for the veterans who use the Livermore VA, which was recommended for closure. *Jeff Stoffer*

“You can’t just build a facility and say, ‘Good medicine will happen here,’” adds Dr. Leonard Goldschmidt, medical director of the eye clinic at Livermore, where he developed an interactive Patient Education and Services Kiosk, a computer program now being replicated at other facilities in California. “It’s taken years to build up this facility, years of good leadership. They have spent a lot of money here. I think this (the CARES proposal) is a tremendous mistake.”

Waco Mayor Linda Ethridge and her task force wanted cost-benefit information from VA and did not get it. “In the first round of planning, which came from VA officials out in the field (in Texas), they recommended a plan that included keeping this hospital open,” Ethridge says. “They were advocates of a continued presence for this hospital. After that plan was submitted, someone higher up in the organization came back and said, ‘You need to do some more cost cutting.’”

Once the call came that Waco had to go, the VISN was forced “to defend a position that didn’t rise from their ranks,” Ethridge says.

Thus, when the CARES Commission had its October field hearing in Waco, VA’s case for

consolidation did not include a cost-benefit analysis. “Part of that is because of the haste in which that change of decision occurred. They have acknowledged they can’t give any cost-benefit analysis. They haven’t done that yet. I think one of the strongest points that we made in the hearing is that if you make a decision first, and then you gather data to support it, that data is suspect. That is going to be an uncomfortable position (to defend).”

In a CARES commission field hearing in October at Canandaigua, meanwhile, the savings estimate of closing the facility dropped by \$15 million – from

\$23 million last spring to \$8 million to \$10 million in the fall – frustrating commissioner Charles Battaglia, who was quoted in a newspaper article as saying, “We knew (before the hearing) that the data wasn’t there. We’ve asked for it. We’ve been promised it. But we’re still waiting to get it.”

As the CARES commissioners wrestled with VA’s draft plan and the December decision drew near, Principi reiterated that he would approve or reject the CARES proposal in its entirety. By then, veterans were beginning to suspect that many of the recommended closures were on the table long before a CARES commission was assembled. CARES was perceived as a tool to shut down hospitals and reduce services in order to control costs. The irony of that perception, however, was that no one – not even VA – seemed to know how much cost would be controlled by these measures. Veterans, however, were beginning to understand what this all could mean for them.

Approved or not, Tauscher says, the CARES process “... has a serious effect. Veterans who use the hospital at Livermore are forced to live under the spectre of having to



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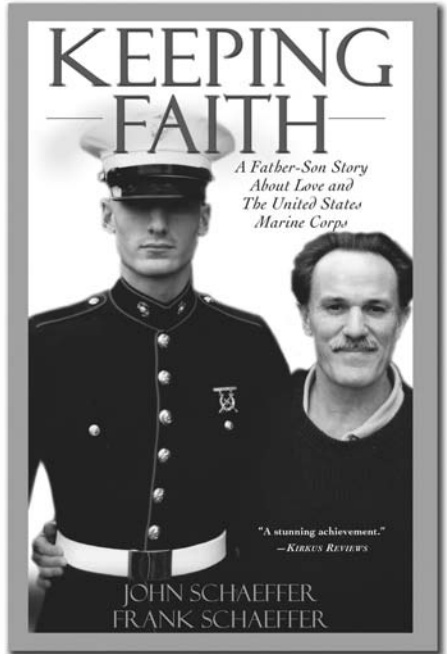
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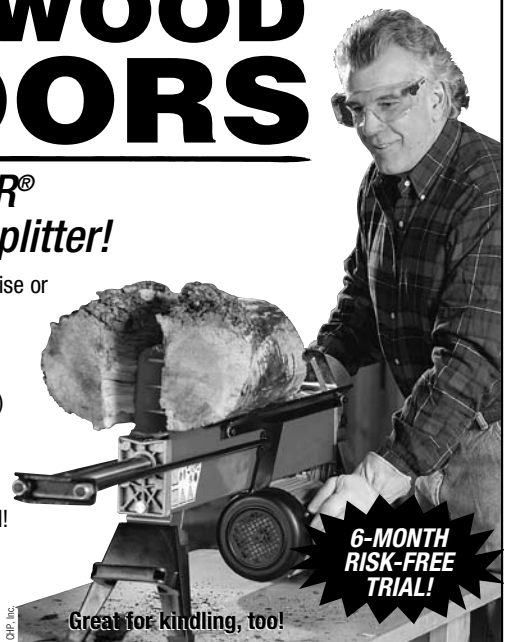
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figure out how they are going to get from the Central Valley to Palo Alto for a 7:30 a.m. urology appointment. They would have to leave at 4 in the morning.”

“The traffic is horrendous,” says Martin, who makes a career of helping veterans wade through the VA process. “I had a veteran

are no quick fixes. Doctors prescribe a variety of different medicines and treatments to control the images in his head, to take the edge off the years he spent tortured by that parasite, and to put behind him the indignity he felt in the early 1970s, when he first filed his VA claim.

The buildings here would be overcrowded if the people who needed them were here. Then they thought they could come in and quickly close down these hospitals, and before anybody had a chance to do anything about it, the doors would be closed. They knew what hospitals they were going to close. They knew it all along.”

Just like Waco and Livermore, Canandaigua had reason to believe its VA medical center would not be shut down by CARES. Calabrese says he and several other veterans were specifically told by a state VA official

‘Back in the 1990s, when they started throwing veterans out and closing down critical care, this plan began to be implemented, in phases. I believe all this was staged, and it has been falling into place a little bit at a time.’

—Ralph Calabrese, Korean War veteran from Canandaigua, N.Y.

in here today. He had to go to Palo Alto last Thursday. A Vietnam vet. He had an exam. He’s got cancer related to Agent Orange, had to have his arm taken off at the shoulder. He’s had to have so much chemotherapy that it’s affected his brain. The doctor called it ‘chemo brain.’ This veteran had to go three and a half hours one way to Palo Alto. It got so bad coming back, he had to pull over. Coming back, it took five hours. His wife, who works part time, had to take the day off to take him. This is absolutely not a well-off family. They are doing everything in the world to survive. It isn’t just the vet. It’s what the family goes through. To force a vet to go three and a half hours when you’ve got a facility within an hour is ridiculous. When VA tells you, ‘He’ll go where we tell him to go,’ it tears you up. The people who are making the decisions aren’t making the drives veterans are making, on limited incomes. I will fight like hell for these veterans.”



James Joyce enters Highland Drive’s 13-day inpatient alcohol program and comes out with a clear head. His PTSD is diagnosed and treatment begins. He attends 42 PTSD and Alcoholics Anonymous group sessions in a three-week period. “I was in for the quick fix.” He soon realizes there

As treatment progresses, things begin to change. He takes his wife on a vacation to Gulf Shores, Ala., and assumes a steadier pace on the group sessions. The PTSD increases his disability rating to 100 percent. He starts to regain balance, appreciate life, connect with other Vietnam War veterans, attend reunions, and enjoy the freedom he put his life on the line to protect. His faith is renewed. So, too, is his pride. “I am proud of what I did, proud that I was a Marine, and that I fought for freedom. I am still proud. That’s what gets me, how the VA could make me so low at one point that I would throw my uniforms away.”



Seventy-five-year-old Ralph Calabrese of Canandaigua, N.Y., is blind in one eye because his bunker was blown up in Korea more than 50 years ago. But he was able to see coming for a long time last fall’s eruption over VA health care. “This didn’t just happen,” he says. “Back in the 1990s, when they started throwing veterans out and closing down critical care, this plan began to be implemented, in phases. I believe all this was staged, and it has been falling into place a little bit at a time. We were asking where the patients were going between 1998 and 2000, and the response we kept getting was they couldn’t tell us, because of patient confidentiality.

in a VISN meeting in September 2002 not to believe any rumors that Canandaigua would fall victim to the process. In February of last year, however, the community realized that some kind of cutbacks might be proposed, so an advisory committee was assembled, consisting of local veterans, VA employees, and elected leaders at all levels, including the congressional delegation. He said the advisory group was preparing its defense against cutbacks, when the CARES draft plan recommended complete closure of the 171-acre, 248-bed, 722-employee facility and redistribution of its patients to six other VA hospitals and private-sector facilities.

“I know a veteran who came up to me the other day,” Calabrese says, “And he said, ‘You know, Ralph, why don’t they just take us out back and shoot us? They just throw us in corners until they don’t have any more corners.’”

The American Legion’s position on CARES has not wavered, National Commander John Brieden says. “As long as we have assurances that veterans’ health care is the top priority, and decisions about facility use are not driven by a desire just to cut costs for the budget’s sake, we are willing to go along with the CARES process. But when dollars are the priority, we have problems. If CARES comes with a big construction cost burden over the



Accidental Discovery of Mysterious “Gold Rush” Coin Stuns Experts

World's Rarest U.S. \$20 Gold Proof Found: The San Francisco Mint 1854 Double Eagle Proof!

WASHINGTON, D.C.—A one-of-a-kind U.S. Treasury gold proof coin has been accidentally discovered within the vaults of the Smithsonian Institution. This 1854-S gold Double Eagle \$20 coin was struck by the San Francisco Mint in its first year of operation. The San Francisco Mint was born out of the need for a Western Frontier Mint when, in January of 1848, gold flakes were discovered at Sutter's Mill triggering one of the most important chapters in U.S. History—The California Gold Rush! To the surprise of historians, this single “S” mint Proof coin was individually struck from specially polished minting dies. How this unique Proof Double Eagle made its way across the continent and then into the hands of the Smithsonian Institution is an unsolved mystery to this day.

Today the First Federal Mint announces the public release of the first ever gold Proof commemorative honoring this rarest U.S. Government \$20 gold piece. This 10mil gold Proof has a frosted image against a deep mirror field, creating a breathtaking work of art in gold. This 150th anniversary Mint release honors the legacy of a true historic masterpiece.

The magnificent 10mil gold proof measures a full 39mm diameter to truly showcase the beauty and intricacy of this legendary coin design. The 10mil gold proof is available only through this limited edition, private release from the First Federal Mint at the advance issue price of \$19.95 each.

Fabulous Rarity Valued at \$12 Million

Only one original proof coin is known to have been struck. Even the foremost rare coin experts were unaware of its existence until it was accidentally found



deep in the vaults of the museum.

America's foremost authority on U.S. gold coins, David Akers, has written, “the 1854-S Double Eagle is easily the most significant and desirable branch mint proof coin in existence”. With the recent auction sale of one of the three 1933 St. Gaudens Double Eagles for \$7.9 million, senior numismatist Nicholas Bruyer estimates the unique 1854-S Proof Double Eagle would bring at least \$12 million if it ever becomes available at auction.

The “Gold Rush” Coin.

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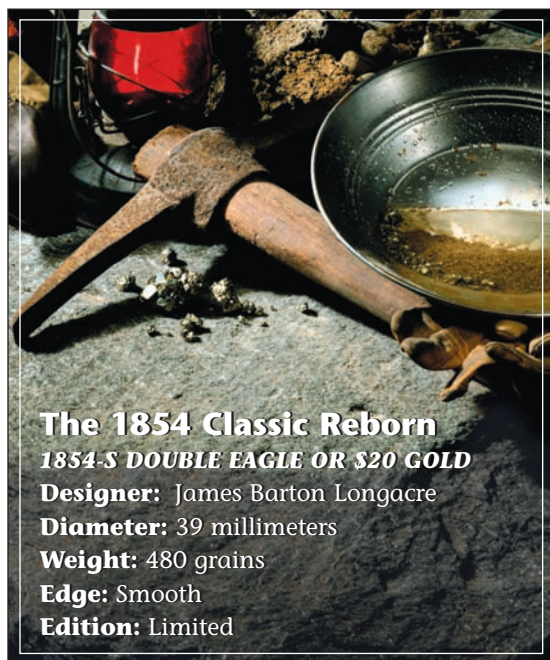
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Under the supervision of physical therapist Kevin Ochs, veteran Robert Brooks performs exercises at the Livermore VA. **Jeff Stoffer**

next few years, we cannot let those costs cut into VA's ability to care for patients."

If VA health care were a mandatory appropriation, Brieden says, the problem of matching dollars with demand wouldn't exist. Capital reserves would not be, in all practicality, payroll reserves in the event Congress cannot pass the budget, and VA hospitals are forced to function on stagnant continuing resolutions. The Legion has supported mandatory-funding legislation in both of the last two sessions of Congress – appropriations made on a cost-per-patient basis, with increased authority for VA to bill private insurance and Medicare for reimbursement. "That would make the return of Group 8 veterans not only viable, but desirable," Brieden says. "It's pretty tough on facilities to keep up with increases in third-party reimbursement targets, which grow every year, especially after VA cut off Group 8s."

Further, Brieden says, a major CARES overhaul would not be necessary if the system had been given the resources all along to keep up with its infrastructure needs. "Why wasn't this the province of VA's own Office of

Facilities Management, whose mission is to plan and manage capital assets in the system? Was it a lack of available funding? I am aware of many VA facilities that have used capital reserves to make payroll and to cover other operating costs. Again, these are the issues you inevitably encounter when funds are appropriated on a discretionary basis."

Brieden says he fully commiserates with veterans whose hospitals were targeted for realignment last fall. "It is an emotional issue for people who swore never to leave their buddies on the battlefield, and this has become a battlefield. It is especially sensitive now that we have so many young men and women coming home from war, needing VA health care. When our nation makes a commitment to send our soldiers to battle, the cost does not end when the war does. VA health care is a delayed cost of war, an obligation the public wants the federal government to fulfill. And it's a pretty tough sell when last year's problem was overcrowding, and this year's problem is too much empty space. The public has a hard time understanding that. Veterans do, too."

It has indeed been a process.

That's how CARES has always been cast – not a project or a program, but a thing in motion, upon which was riding the entire VA health-care system, hundreds of thousands of employees, millions of veterans, uncounted others yet to serve, if not by the direct actions then by the precedent CARES might have set. So far, it has been a process of many unexpected byproducts and a rising ocean of questions.

If reducing the cost of under-used buildings was the goal, why weren't cost-benefit analyses done before realignment recommendations were announced? Why were VISN officials told to rethink their first recommendations? Was there a preconceived list? Why were so many of the targeted hospitals predominantly mental-health or long-term care providers? Are potential buyers or leaseholders waiting in the wings to snap up VA facilities, where values are appraised low because they factor in the cost of razing the existing buildings? Where is the money coming from to pay for the new construction? Why do employees think there were deliberate efforts to reduce inpatient occupancy rates? What historical evidence does VA have to suggest veteran patient numbers will peak in 2012 and decline after that? If the peak is yet to come, why is VA cutting back on space now? Will enough room be left for VA to fulfill its role in case of a major natural disaster or terrorist attack on U.S. soil?

Was it in any way conceivable that a 15-member commission – in a period of eight months – could agree on the blueprint for VA's biggest metamorphosis since World War II?

"We want to know," asks Waco Mayor Ethridge, "what is your plan for these veterans? What is your plan for psychiatric care as you shift to this outpatient model? Our concern is that the same people who are making management decisions that reduce the census at the hospital are now the people saying we have to close it because the census is low. And so

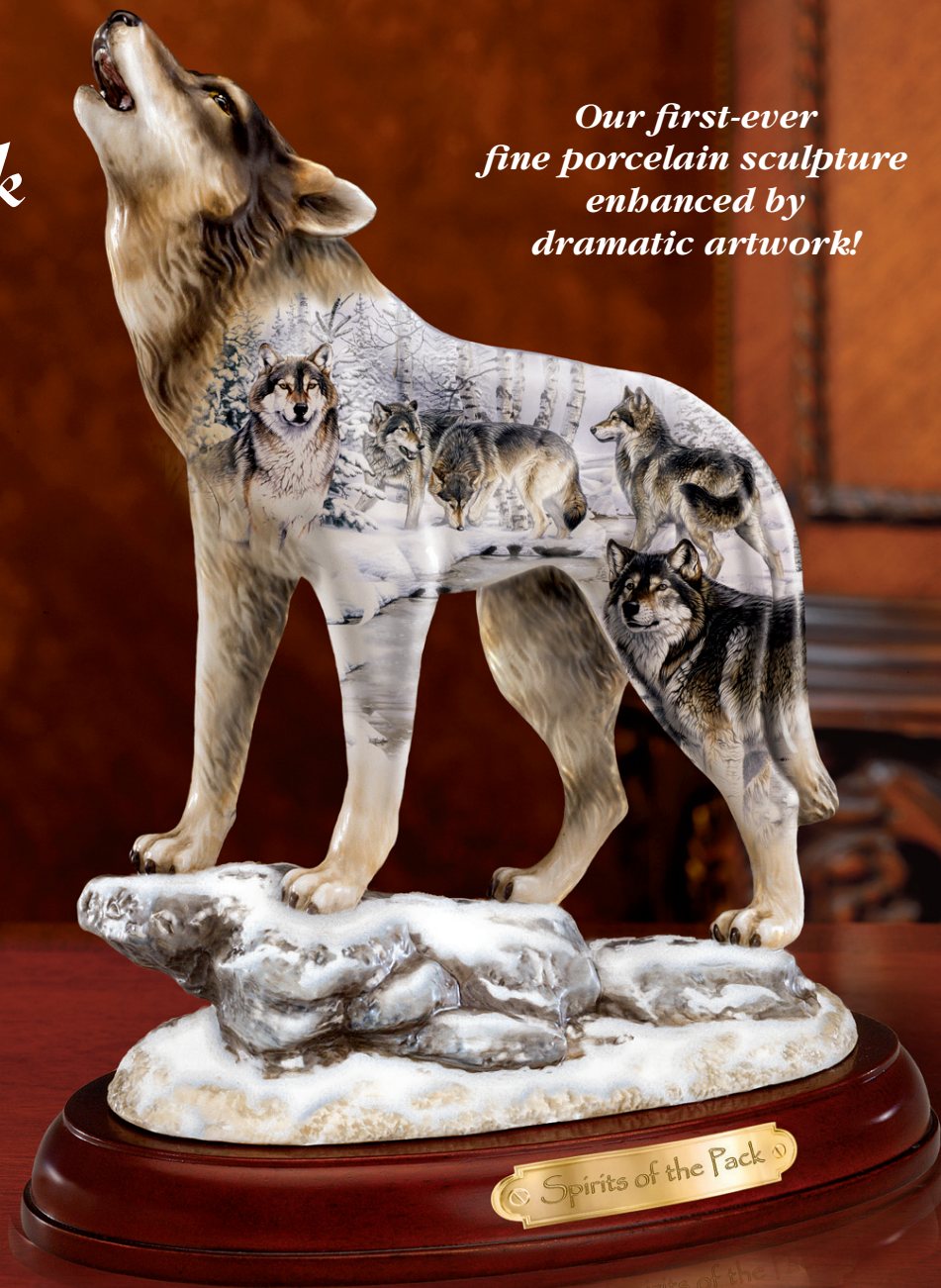
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we are not sure that the number of people in the hospital at any given time is really a function of demand. It's a combination of demand and internal protocols and internal decisions that we don't really understand. We have had enough concerns that we want to investigate it."

'I honestly think they thought they were going to slip in like a thief in the night and then just disappear, and we were going to do nothing... Did they think we were just going to roll over and die? Never happen.'

— Dave Fisher, a formerly homeless veteran in Waco

The process churns.

Two VA employees in central Texas say they believe the reason that only the highest-ranking administrators support the closures is that they will receive financial incentives for pushing them through. "We've had some money come through for bonuses," says one VA employee who asked that his name not be published. "From what I understand, they get a big bonus if it happens. Our director is going to get a bigger bonus check at the end of the year if he can get this VA closed. I don't know how many other people are going to get bonuses."

And churns.

"I know it for a fact," says Bill Hueske of Waco, a disabled Vietnam War veteran and employee at Temple VA Medical Center, 40 miles away from Waco, which would pick up much of Waco's inpatient load if CARES goes through. "I know people who fill out the checks at the end of the year. Upper management looks out for upper management. They don't care about the patients."

The process angers.

"We're fighting terrorism all over the world," Calabrese observes. "Well, we have a second front in the war on terror. If people could see these veterans and their families – families that don't know what is going to happen next – if that isn't a form of psychological terrorism, I don't

know what is. If we're talking about fighting terror, we need to start here. This is sinful. They have billions and billions to spend overseas and millions and millions to spend on pork-barrel projects, and they don't have money for veterans. Something is wrong."

It provokes.

"I honestly think they thought they were going to slip in like a thief in the night and then just disappear, and we were going to do nothing," says Dave Fisher, a formerly homeless veteran in Waco. "This is not a community that is reactionary. These people are anticipatory, and they are pro-active. Did they think we were just going to roll over and die? Never happen."

And the process continues.



James Joyce brings a Highland Drive counselor to a gathering of veterans advocates at a hotel lobby in Pittsburgh. He says this is the kind of young man who restores faith among veterans at Highland Drive. This, he says, is someone who saves people's minds in a facility that was built for a special purpose, a brand of care unavailable on the open market.

Joyce fears his progress will turn to regress if he is forced to get in line downtown. He wants to stay in the place where he discovered VA isn't just about money – it's about care, too. He wants to be where he was finally welcomed home, with the honor and dignity befitting a man who went into combat when his nation called. To him, it's personal, this trust he now has with his VA health-care facility. "I know they will help me," he says. "For five years, they have helped

me. I don't want to lose them. That is my fear."



In the year 2003, VA tested the mettle of men and women who are well-trained to defend themselves in battle. Caught up in a swirling barrage of bureaucracy, of shifting priorities and incomplete data, veterans stepped up and proclaimed they would not let Lincoln's words fall into the silence of history. Few events outside of war have so bonded America's veterans, a great many

of whom won't live long enough to see the changes in VA health care now proposed, changes over which they demand voice. Their battle is that of the doughboys of the Great War who came home and created the modern VA. It is a battle taken up in honor of all who served proudly in uniform, from Normandy Beach to the Chosin Reservoir, from Vietnam to Baghdad.

It's a battle America's veterans plan to win for those serving their country today who will come home and take up the fight for those serving tomorrow. History is clear. America keeps producing veterans because if it weren't for those willing to stand in harm's way for freedom, there would be no federal budget to fight over, no buildings to realign, no VA, no Congress, no America. That is why Americans do not complain to their congressmen that too much money is being spent caring for those who have borne the battles.

James Joyce knows that. Veterans' families know that. And our government cannot forget it. That is the message veterans sent loud and clear last year – thanks, ironically, to the CARES process. 🌿

Jeff Stoffer is managing editor of The American Legion Magazine.

Article design: Holly K. Soria

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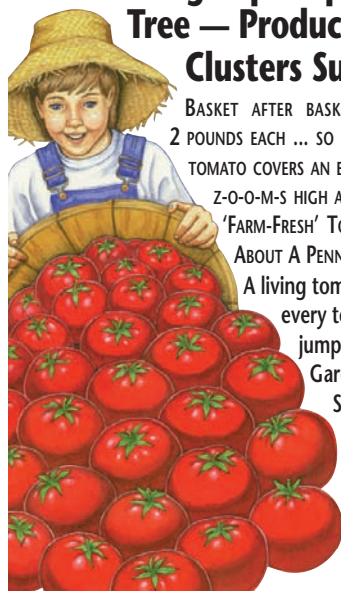
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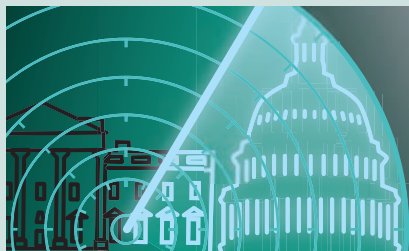
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Nuclear warning

With North Korea rattling nuclear sabers and the United States moving ahead with its plan for a phased withdrawal from the heavily armed demilitarized zone separating the two Koreas, Washington is making it clear that South Korea is still protected by America's nuclear umbrella. In fact, during a visit to Asia in late November, Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld went out of his way to remind Pyongyang of America's position as a nuclear deterrent.

As Bill Gertz reported in *The Washington Times*, such a pointed reference to America's nuclear capacity is highly unusual – but arguably neces-



sary, given the unpredictability of North Korea. The slow-motion withdrawal of U.S. forces southward, away from the front lines in Korea, could take 13 years. America's nuclear force will no doubt be important during this delicate process in deterring North Korean aggression.

The United States withdrew its nuclear weapons from South Korean territory in 1991, in hopes of coaxing Pyongyang away from making the peninsula a nuclear tripwire. Since then, Washington has kept nuclear-armed submarines in the region as a deterrent.

– A.W.D.

United States of Europe?

The European Union is lumbering toward a new era of political and geographic integration this year, as 10 new members are added into the E.U. fold and a new draft constitution works its way through capitals for review and comment. Papering over the glaring problems of 2003, when Europe was badly splintered over the Iraq war, E.U. leaders are pushing the expansion and constitution as proof of Europe's "unity in diversity."

The E.U. constitutional process is a major undertaking, and at 263 pages, single-spaced, so is reading the E.U. constitution. It addresses everything from the right to a free and fair trial to fisheries, monetary policy and occupational hygiene. Its preamble quotes Thucydides, boasting that "power is in the hands not of a minority but of the greatest number."

One can't help but compare the European Union's behemoth to the U.S. Constitution, which is a modest 4,700 words. While the E.U. document comments on specifics and scrambles to address seemingly every imaginable social, political and cultural issue, the U.S. Constitution deals with broad, thematic matters: treaties and taxation, war and peace, trade and commerce, rights and responsibilities. And while the European Union races to empower the majority and lubricate the gears of government, the compact

penned by America's founding fathers actually sought to protect the minority from the tyranny of the majority, created a system of checks and balances, and wisely chose to create a republic rather than a democracy.

Almost 220 years later, their masterpiece endures. One wonders if the European Union's constitution will even come into force, let alone stand the test of time.

Deep cuts, deep water

Speaking of submarines, a recent analysis conducted by *The San Diego Union-Tribune* found that the U.S. Navy's fleet of warships has shrunk to its smallest size since the start of World War I.

The Navy's battle force totals only 296 ships today, even though the demands of the global war on terrorism continue to hurl the Navy into virtually every ocean and sea on earth. Navy ships are

monitoring the Persian Gulf, protecting the vital shipping lanes of the Mediterranean, Atlantic and Pacific, policing the waters around the Horn of Africa, keeping watch over Taiwan and South Korea, and supporting anti-terror missions in the Philippines and Afghanistan. According to Rep. Duncan Hunter, R-Calif., who chairs the House Armed Services Committee, "We've cut too deep."

Before it gets better, it will get worse. In FY 2003, 20 ships were mothballed and just four were christened. The Navy is on course to have only 291 ships in 2006, before building back up to 300 by the end of this decade.

Of course, more is not always better: the Navy's newest ships can perform multiple missions and roles, while their older counterparts often did fewer tasks less efficiently and more expensively.

– Alan W. Dowd



The guided-missile cruiser USS *Anzio* leads a formation of ships in the Baltic Sea. The U.S. Navy's fleet of warships numbers only 296, but these vessels are more efficient than their predecessors. **U.S. Navy**



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Chickenpox redux

Shingles unwelcome encore of childhood virus in elderly.

BY DR. MINDY AISEN

If you had the chickenpox as a child and are now older than 60, you are in the group most likely to get shingles, a miserably painful skin and nerve infection caused by a reactivation of the chickenpox virus.

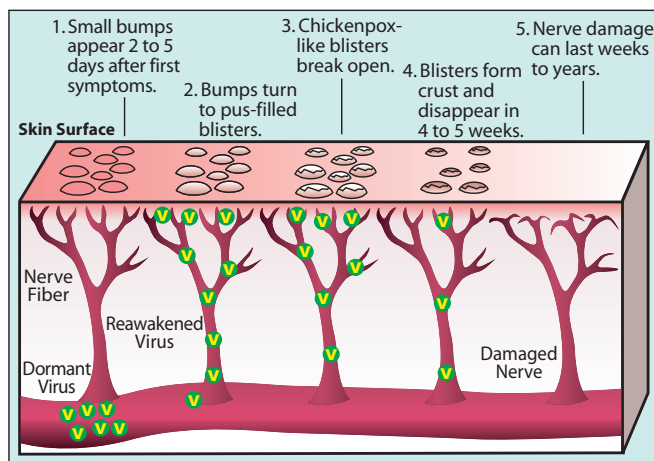
Each year, more than 850,000 Americans develop shingles, also known as herpes zoster. About half of those who live to age 85 will get the disease – but only those who had chickenpox when they were young.

The same virus that causes chickenpox causes shingles. When a young person recovers from chickenpox, the varicella zoster virus doesn't disappear – it “hides out” in clusters of nerve cells called sensory ganglia, next to the spinal cord. The immune system causes the virus to lay dormant for many years, but as the immune system weakens with age, the virus can reactivate, resulting in shingles.

Factors other than age can heighten the risk of shingles. Those with compromised immune systems – such as people with AIDS or Hodgkin's disease, or those taking drugs that suppress the immune system – are more likely to develop the condition. Stress also can play a role in triggering the ailment.

Painful Symptoms. When the virus reawakens, it travels through the nerves and to the skin. The first symptoms can be flu-like: fever, chills, headache, nausea, upset stomach. Some people experience itchiness, a tingling feeling or pain in the initial stage.

Within a few days, a painful rash develops, usually on the chest, back or face. When the rash is at its peak, the pain can be



Doug Rollison

intense and unrelenting. This rash develops into small, fluid-filled blisters that begin to dry out and crust over after about a week.

For most people, the disease will resolve itself even without treatment. And after one attack of shingles, the condition is unlikely to return.

At the same time, treatment with antiviral drugs – especially within the first couple of days – is highly recommended, as it can reduce the pain and may help prevent a shingles complication known as postherpetic neuralgia. This condition results from damaged nerves and can continue long after the rash heals. While not life-threatening, it can develop into chronic pain that may bring with it insomnia, weight loss, depression and other medical problems.

Fortunately, only about 10 percent of all people with shingles develop postherpetic neuralgia, and in most cases the pain is not severe and goes away within a couple of months. Older patients, however, are at higher risk.

In some cases, other complications can occur. If shingles appears on the face, it can lead to vision or hearing problems. If the cornea becomes infected, the result can be permanent blindness.

Contact with an infected person does not cause another person's

dormant virus to awaken. But the virus from a shingles patient may cause chickenpox in someone who has not had it before.

Study Under Way.

Shingles research is being conducted across the United States by VA, in cooperation with the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases.

Researchers are testing a more potent version of the chickenpox vaccine

given to children to see if it can prevent the occurrence of shingles in volunteers who are at least 60 years old and who never had shingles before. The study has recruited some 37,000 volunteers at 21 VA medical centers nationwide. Results from this clinical trial are expected within a year or so. If the vaccine proves effective, this will be a huge step in helping to prevent shingles for today's baby boomers and future generations.

Dr. Michael Oxman of San Diego, the VA researcher coordinating the shingles vaccine study, has reported that seniors who regularly performed a Chinese style of exercise called “tai chi” for 15 weeks boosted their immunity to shingles, as measured in special medical tests. The study is considered the first randomized, controlled trial to have shown that behavioral changes can increase the immune factors that protect against shingles.

Mindy Aisen, M.D., is deputy chief research and development officer for the Veterans Health Administration.

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BY JAMES V. CARROLL

Running laps, riding hither and yon on a 10-speed bicycle, attending aerobic class two times a week or lifting weights are proven ways to achieve greater health. But let's face it: most of us derive little pleasure from grueling exercises. The effort it takes to lose extra pounds or gain strength or endurance seem so overwhelming at times we often give up halfway in. Or, worse, we don't even try.

But there's more than one way to tighten a tummy or strengthen a heart. Health researchers say participating in yard work and gardening activities can do as good a job of sculpting a robust body, often even better. Hoeing, mowing, sawing, sweeping, raking, digging, planting and weeding produce beautiful lawns, bountiful harvests and a fitness program that can be therapeutic, healthy and fun.

Fitter Bodies. To many, yard and garden work is not a workout – it's a pleasure.

"It's taken me almost half my life to discover a fabulous gym outside my door," says Dan Hickey, former editor of *National Gardening Magazine*. "Turning compost is essentially lifting weights. Raking is like using a rowing machine and pushing the mower is similar to walking on a treadmill. Our exercise machines are post-hole diggers, shovels, rakes, push mowers and wheelbarrows. Our running track is the yard and garden."

What Hickey and thousands of backyard enthusiasts have found is that 45 minutes of yard and



Image Ideas

garden work burns as many calories as 30 minutes of aerobics. "We have long believed yard and garden work was good for us," Hickey says.

Medical scientists confirm it.

University of Arkansas-Fayetteville researchers report that yard and garden exercises such as weeding, mowing, digging and raking help produce stronger bones. Women older than 50 who actively engage in yard and garden activities once a week have higher bone-density scores than women who regularly cycle, walk, jog or swim.

Yard and garden activities also tone and firm your body. Muscle groups in the upper body, back and legs are exercised by digging. Raking works arms, shoulders, back, hamstrings and buttocks muscles. Planting or transplanting activities challenge muscle groups in the hands, forearms, shoulders and upper back. Weeding works muscles in the arms, legs, hips, buttocks and hamstrings. Pushing a lawnmower uses all the body's muscles.

Slimmer Waists. While our minds may convince us of the benefits of healthier bodies, our

eyes seldom stray from ever-present full-length mirrors. Health and fitness experts tell us the top reason for embarking on an exercise program is to win the battle of the midriff bulge. It is therefore important to understand the dynamics of the tape measure.

The calories a person consumes and burns determine daily weight loss. To shed a pound of fat, 3,500 more calories must be burned than consumed. So, the ideal way to lose weight is to eat less and exercise more. The recommended daily diet is 1,500 to 2,000 calories. Experts say losing a pound a week is more likely to produce permanent results than sudden reduction programs, which can be unhealthy. To lose that pound each week, a person has to burn 500 more calories a day than he or she consumes.

Yard and garden activities create excellent opportunities to engage in a program of gradual, long-lasting weight loss. Working in the backyard can burn 120 to 250 calories per half hour, depending on the chore's intensity or the person's weight, according to Sherry Rindels of the Department of Horticulture at Iowa State University. Thirty minutes of digging can burn 150 to

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200 calories, she says. Mowing with a push mower burns 180 to 236 calories, while planting or transplanting burns 135 to 180 calories. Raking can burn 120 to 157 calories per half hour, and pulling weeds burns 138 to 181 calories, she says.

The Web site Doityourself.com says a 180-pound person can burn 61 calories in 30 minutes by simply watering the lawn or garden. In the same time, bagging leaves burns 162 calories, clearing brush burns 202 calories, and chopping wood burns 243 calories. As a comparison, a half-hour nap consumes 36 calories, and sitting quietly burns 40 calories.

Cautionary Tips. As with all exercise, use caution and consult a physician before embarking on yard and garden activities for the first time. These safety tips are offered by Diabeticlifestyle.com:

- Wear sunscreen, sunglasses, a hat and appropriate clothing. Protect yourself from biting insects by wearing bug repellent. Protect your hands and feet. Wear safety glasses when trimming trees and shrubs. When applying chemical pesticides, always carefully read instructions first.
- Stretch, warm up and cool down when you are done. Drink plenty of water, and take time out of the sun to relax your muscles.
- Take breaks. Try to get 30 minutes of activity each day, but experts say we can break the time

into 10-minute sessions and still get the full exercise benefit.

■ Use a cushion if you are on your knees. Keep your back straight, and don't sit on your heels. Stand up, and stretch every 10 minutes or so.

■ Use your legs, not your back, when lifting heavy objects or picking up tools. Use a light long-handled shovel, or spade and never overload it.

■ Diabetics should keep glucose-monitoring equipment nearby and stash glucose tablets or other carbohydrates in a pocket. Measure blood glucose levels before going outside and set a timer to schedule the next test.

The Bottom Line. Yard and garden activities are great for improving overall health, says Dr. William Haskell, professor of medicine at the Stanford University Center for Research and Disease. But it is important to combine backyard work with a program of regular aerobic exercises such as swimming, jogging or cycling. Such exercises make you breathe harder, which in turn promotes improved lung function and a stronger and more efficient heart. Moderate exercises like lawn or

garden work do not always provide these benefits, he says.

Also, to be healthy, you must eat healthy.

The fruits and vegetables you harvest during the summer and autumn contain phytochemicals and antioxidants that may reduce risk of heart disease and some cancers, the National Gardening Association reports. Fiber in fruits and vegetables also may reduce risk of colon cancer. And they are low in fat, making them excellent weight-loss foods. Above all, fresh fruits and vegetables are delicious.

And everything tastes better when you're feeling healthy, fit and motivated to make your home environment more aesthetically pleasing and efficient.

James V. Carroll is an assistant editor at The American Legion Magazine.

This article is designed to provide general information. It is not intended to be, nor is it medical advice. Readers should consult their personal physician before beginning any new physical exercise program including yard or garden activities.



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When a British dealer brought what is believed to be the King Farouk coin to the U.S. for sale, it was promptly seized by U.S. Treasury agents. Before it could be melted, the seizure was successfully contested and the 1933 \$20 Gold Piece was put away for safe keeping in the Treasury's vaults in **THE WORLD TRADE CENTER!** Luckily, it was moved to Fort Knox before the terrorist attacks of September 11th.

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Legion helps military families cope

When Shawn Malkin of Lansing, Mich., an Army Reserve specialist E-4 with the 303rd Military Police Company, was deployed to Guantanamo Bay, Cuba, in October 2002, his wife, Rachel, had her hands full. With a new home to put in order, a 4-year-old son and a baby on the way, she had no room for a crisis.

Shortly after Rachel and her son moved into their new home, she discovered a roof leak and mold in a closet. With her husband 2,000 miles from home and her son ill from the mold, Malkin turned to The American Legion's Family Support Network for help. FSN supplied contact information for financial assistance and for roofing estimates. Holt, Mich., Post 238 and Haslett, Mich., Post 269 contributed financially and did the footwork for Malkin.

"The Legion helped our family in a very tough spot," Malkin said. "They really came through for us when I had no place else to go."

Increased deployment of the National Guard and reservists in the war on terrorism creates heavy burdens on many families left behind to face the hardships of monthly expenses and everyday household tasks without a spouse to help.

The Family Support Network, with its toll-free nationwide hotline, helps military personnel

and their families connect with local services.

"The men and women serving in the military are making a great sacrifice for our country, and so are their families," said the Legion's FSN coordinator, Jason Kees. "The American Legion stands committed in its efforts to ensure that those families don't have to shoulder this burden alone."

"The Family Support Network was not created to replace existing Department of Defense support programs but rather to augment them and ensure that no family falls through the cracks," Kees said. "With 15,000 Legion posts, we have a lot of resources available at the local level ready to help our military family members in need."

The Family Support Network depends on Legionnaires at the local level to assist these families, whether it means mowing lawns, doing house repairs and chores, running errands or helping a family meet monthly expenses. Posts also serve military families by referring them to social services in their communities. Posts also are encouraged to visit

and adopt local Reserve and National Guard units in order to offer assistance.

Temporary Financial Assistance.

Another Legion program helping military families is Temporary Financial Assistance.

Through TFA, a post can call upon the national organization for cash assistance to help meet the basic needs of veterans' children. Funds are granted to eligible families when need has been determined and all other local resources have been exhausted.

Veterans seeking assistance don't have to be Legion members, but they must be Legion-eligible or currently on active duty with minor children living in the home. Cash grants, not loans, are provided to keep families intact.

In FY 2003, The Family Support Network answered more than 1,400 requests and inquiries. During that same period, TFA awarded more than \$330,000 in non-repayable grants to approximately 400 families, benefiting more than 850 children throughout the United States.

For more info

To request assistance, contact the Family Support Network:

Call: (800) 504-4098

E-mail: familysupport@legion.org

Online: www.legion.org/support

Legislative Action Center a valuable tool

Members of The American Legion family are encouraged to sign up to receive e-mail updates from the Legion's Legislative Action Center.

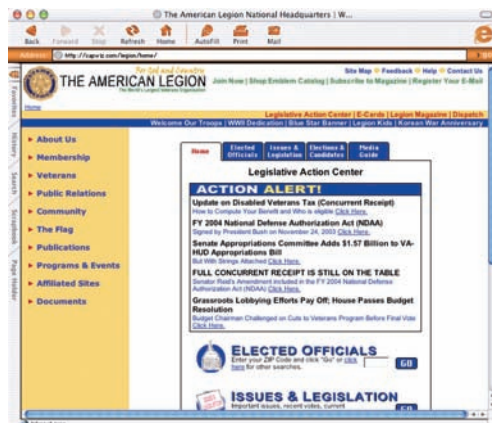
The Legislative Action Center provides updates on key American Legion issues, such as the disabled veterans tax, national security,

the flag-protection amendment and mandatory spending for VA health care. The center assists Legion family members in looking up members of Congress,

registering online to vote, looking up state election results and searching for media outlets in their area.

For more info

Register at www.capwiz.com/legion to receive e-mail updates.



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Study to evaluate long-term health effects of military service largest of its kind

The Millennium Cohort Study, a project recommended by Congress and sponsored by the Department of Defense, will survey nearly 140,000 people during and after their military service for up to 21 years, making it the largest study of its kind in military history. The goal of the Millennium Cohort Study is to evaluate the long-term health effects of military service.

Soon after Operation Desert Storm ended in 1991, some Gulf War veterans reported unexplained medical symptoms. Many attributed their illnesses to deployment-related exposures. At that time, the Department of Defense had scant pre-deployment health data to compare with post-deployment health assessments, making it difficult to sort out the effects of deployment. It is



estimated that more than \$3 billion have been spent on research and programs to understand Gulf War illnesses.

For more info

Online: www.millenniumcohort.org
Call: (888) 942-5222

After 1991, DoD and the Institute of Medicine outlined the need for systematically collected, population-based data to evaluate the health of servicemembers during and after service. The Millennium Cohort Study evaluates longitudinal data on military personnel over a 21-year period to help researchers and military leaders determine the health impact of deployments more accurately.

The Millennium Cohort Study has the potential of uncovering unanticipated exposure-disease associations in a relatively young, healthy population and contributing new, important information to the field of preventive medicine and public health. While military research teams will manage many of these efforts, civilian research teams are expected to contribute, too.

New Agent Orange benefits regulation published

Chronic lymphocytic leukemia, or CLL, has been officially added to the list of diseases for which Vietnam War veterans can receive free-of-charge health care and disability compensation from the Department of Veterans Affairs. American Legion National Commander John Brieden praised the announcement that the government will extend benefits to Vietnam War veterans suffering from CLL.

"The Institute of Medicine found a link between CLL and exposure to the herbicide Agent Orange, and that finding is a sound basis on which to award just compensation and VA health care to Vietnam veterans suffering



U.S. Air Force jets fly over an area near Saigon in 1968, spraying the defoliant Agent Orange. Agent Orange has since been blamed for a number of veterans' illnesses. *Corbis*

from the disease," Brieden said. "The American Legion and Columbia University broke ground with a joint study conducted in the 1980s and a recent follow-up study. But the government must plan and fund a more comprehensive study because, obviously, the health of many Vietnam veterans shows the long-lasting effects of their wartime experiences. Certain veterans' illnesses are related to exposure to Agent Orange or to

some other hazardous conditions of battle. By doing a study, the government can determine what exactly is making them sick and grant them long-overdue health care and disability compensation."

For more info

To locate the nearest American Legion service officer regarding benefits under new regulations:
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Legion to participate in WWII memorial dedication

The Memorial Day weekend celebration May 29 on the National Mall in Washington culminates an 11-year effort to honor America's "greatest generation."

The American Legion is planning activities in Washington as part of the dedication. Included are a prayer breakfast, hospitality tent, celebrity reception and walk-a-thon. The National Children's Miracle Network/American Legion Family Candlelight Walk-a-thon will be May 28, honoring Americans who served during World War II by caring for the legacy they fought to ensure: the nation's children. Posts, units and squadrons are encouraged to send at least one representative to Washington to participate by carrying the names of individuals from their communities who served during World War II. Following a memorial service, the list of names will be given to the World War II Memo-

rial Committee for entry into the World War II Registry.

For more info

For a free event-planning guide and walk-a-thon registration forms, contact The American Legion Public Relations Division:

Call: (317) 630-1253

Online: www.legion.org

At the Local Level.

Legion family members across the nation are encouraged to coordinate Memorial Day weekend celebrations with local officials and organizations to:

- Acknowledge the men and women who served America during World War II;
- Advance the ideal of responsible citizenship, including preserving the legacy World War II veterans fought to ensure – namely, America's children; and
- Remember those who paid the ultimate price in the pursuit and preservation of freedom everywhere.

Community celebrations may include prayer breakfasts, joint Legion/Children's Miracle Network community walk-a-thons, award ceremonies recognizing World War II veterans, historic and military displays, dedication

celebrations and World War II expositions, community booths and exhibits, games and entertainment, and public viewings of the National World War II Memorial Dedication.

Special American Legion room rates

Courtyard by Marriott, Embassy Row: 1600 Rhode Island Avenue N.W., Washington, DC 20036. \$95 per room per night plus 9.75 percent tax. Parking fees are \$10 per vehicle per day. Reservations: (800) 321-2211 or (202) 293-8000

Marriott Key Bridge: 1401 Lee Highway, Arlington, VA 22209. \$104 per room per night plus 9.75 percent tax. Parking fees are \$10 per vehicle per day. Reservations: (800) 228-9290 or (703) 524-6400

Marriott Crystal City: 1999 Jefferson Davis Highway, Arlington, VA 22202. \$104 per room per night plus 9.75 percent tax. Parking fees are \$12 per vehicle per day. Reservations: (800) 228-9290 or (703) 413-5500

When making reservations, indicate that you are attending The American Legion World War II Memorial Dedication.

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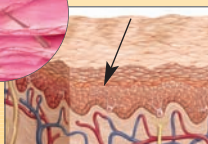
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Travel discounts available to Legion meetings

The American Legion has obtained airline discounts with American Airlines, Northwest Airlines, United Airlines and US Airways for travel to official American Legion meetings during 2004. By making travel arrangements through the Legion's travel agent, Legionnaires will save 5 percent to 10 percent, depending on how far in advance tickets are purchased. A reduced service fee will be charged. Tickets should be purchased at least 30 days prior to travel.

Meetings that qualify for airline travel discounts are shown in the chart at right.

For reservations

Contact Marti Wooden, Finance Division, National Headquarters:

Call: (317) 630-1232

E-mail: mwooden@legion.org

March 4-7	DSO Workshop	Washington (DCA, BWI & IAD)
March 6-10	D.C. Conference	Washington (DCA, BWI & IAD)
March 19-21	NLIC	Macon, Ga., and Atlanta
April 2-4	Oratorical Contest	Indianapolis
April 16-18	NLIC	Hartford, Conn., and Omaha, Neb.
April 23-25	NLIC	Springfield, Ill., and Phoenix
May 1-6	Spring Meetings	Indianapolis
May 14-16	NLIC	Harrisburg, Pa.
July 23-31	Boys Nation	Washington
July 23-31	DSO School and Membership Workshop	Indianapolis
Aug. 10-15	Jr. Shooting Sports	Colorado Springs, Colo.
Aug. 12-16	Baseball Regionals	Hartford, Conn.; Philadelphia; Nashville, Tenn.; Baton Rouge, La., or New Orleans; Cincinnati; Omaha, Neb.; Denver; Eugene, Ore.
Aug. 20-24	American Legion Baseball World Series	Eugene and/or Portland, Ore.
Aug. 27-Sept. 2	National Convention	Nashville, Tenn.
Sept. 17-19	NLIC	Spokane, Wash.
Sept. 24-26	NLIC	Oklahoma City
Oct. 8-14	Fall Meetings	Indianapolis
Oct. 29-31	Americanism Conference	Indianapolis
Nov. 6-12	Legion College	Indianapolis

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Airlines offer Legionnaires travel discounts

Four major airlines are offering travel discounts to members of The American Legion family who plan to attend the National World War II Memorial dedication ceremony in Washington on Memorial Day weekend. Legionnaires are requested to make reservations directly through the airlines, not through The American Legion.

When making airline reservations for members of The American Legion family, use the following telephone numbers and reference codes:

Northwest Airlines: (800) 328-1111. Refer to World File No. NM3SZ.

American Airlines: (800) 433-1790. Refer to AWD No. B136000.

US Airways: (877) 874-7687. Refer to Gold File No. 1661-2946.

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Eagle Scout builds Legion pavilion

Since 1919, American Legion support has benefited the Boy Scouts of America, an organization that builds values, character, patriotism and good citizenship in boys and young men. Members of Boy Scout troops often return the favor by initiating projects that benefit local Legion posts.

Thirteen-year-old Kevin Pawlaski of Shickshinny, Pa., is one such youth.

Pawlaski, who is working to achieve his Eagle Scout rank – Boy Scouting's highest honor – recently recruited 10 members of his troop to help him build a pavilion, as his Eagle Scout leadership service project, for Shickshinny Post 495. The seventh-grader at Northwest High School in Shickshinny and Life Scout in Troop 4 of Iroquois District, Columbia-

Montour Council, had to plan and organize the project, raise funds and see it through to completion.

The post funded 80 percent of the project's cost. Post 495 Commander Michael Truchon helped Pawlaski raise the money.

"I was happy I could help the Legion by building their pavilion," the boy said. "Now they have a shelter for outdoor events."



Courtesy Stanley and Kevin Pawlaski

Prescription plan offers discounts



The American Legion has partnered with one of the nation's leading prescription-benefit managers, RxAmerica, to save veterans an average of almost 20 percent on prescription-drug purchases. The American Legion Discount Prescription Program has already saved Legion members and their families millions of dollars by providing savings on individual drugs of as much as 90 percent. The discount program is available to all members of The

American Legion family.

Benefits include no annual enrollment fee, automatic enrollment in the program, average savings of nearly 20 percent with some up to 90 percent, no income requirements and home delivery.

Note: Maryland Legion members now eligible

Members of The American Legion living in Maryland can now take advantage of the same savings available to Legion members nationwide.

Legionnaires in Action

Dorchester American Legion Post 91 in Cambridge, Md.,

helped alleviate the overwhelming need for hearing aids for veterans living on the eastern shore by presenting four checks totaling \$48,000 to the Maryland VA Health-Care System.

Madiera Beach, Fla., Post 273,

thanks to a local family, donated a new electric mobility scooter valued at \$3,500 to the Bay Pines VA Medical Center in Florida, to be used for hospice patients.

Douglas MacArthur American Legion Post AU03 in Queensland, Australia,

sponsors regular cookouts for U.S. sailors when the submarine crews reach port. Initiated by members of a Sons of The American Legion squadron, the post launched the cookout welcome five years ago.

Maine's 170 American Legion posts and Worcester Wreath Company of Harrington, Maine,

decorated soldiers' graves statewide at Christmas with wreaths provided by posts and purchased by the general public during the 11th annual "Wreaths for Maine Veterans" campaign. Worcester Company also donated wreaths and decorated more than 4,500 graves at Arlington National Cemetery alone. The tradition has been in place for the past 11 years. A wreath-laying ceremony was conducted at the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier on Dec. 17.

Towson, Md., Post 22 sponsors two community bagpipe bands, one of them a juvenile band. The post also offers lessons in bag piping and Scottish drumming to people in the community. The juvenile band has won several contests against adult bands.

American Legion National Conventions

Nashville, Tenn. Aug. 27-Sept. 2, 2004

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The *American Legion Magazine* publishes reunion notices for veterans. Send notices to *The American Legion Magazine*, Attn: Reunions, P.O. Box 1055, Indianapolis, IN 46206, fax (317) 630-1280 or e-mail reunions@legion.org.

Include the branch of service and complete name of the group, no abbreviations, with your request. The listing also should include the reunion dates and city, along with a contact name, telephone number and e-mail address. Listings are published free of charge.

Due to the large number of reunions, *The American Legion Magazine* will publish a group's listing only once a year. Notices should be sent at least six months prior to the reunion to ensure timely publication.

Other Notices

"In Search Of" is a means of getting in touch with people from your unit to plan a reunion. We do not publish listings that seek people for interviews, research purposes, military photos or help in filing a VA claim. Listings must include the name of the unit from which you seek people, the time period and the location, as well as a contact name, tele-

phone number and e-mail address. Send notices to *The American Legion Magazine*, Attn: "In Search Of," P.O. Box 1055, Indianapolis, IN 46206, fax (317) 630-1280 or e-mail reunions@legion.org.

The magazine will not publish the names of individuals, only the name of the unit from which you seek people. Listings are published free of charge.

Life Membership notices are published for Legionnaires who have been awarded life memberships by their posts. This does not include a member's own Paid-Up-For-Life membership. Notices must be submitted on official forms, which may be obtained by sending a self-addressed stamped envelope to *The American Legion Magazine*, Attn: Life Memberships, P.O. Box 1055, Indianapolis, IN 46206.

"Comrades in Distress" listings must be approved by the Legion's Veterans Affairs & Rehabilitation division. If you are seeking to verify an injury received during service, contact your Legion department service officer for information on how to publish a notice.

To respond to a "Comrades in Distress" listing, send a letter to *The American Legion Magazine*, Attn: Comrades in Distress, P.O. Box 1055, Indianapolis, IN 46206. Include the listing's CID number in your response.

"Taps" notices are published only for Legionnaires who served as department commanders or national officers.

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56th Ftr Grp, Fairfax, VA, 6/17-19, Ron Brubaker, (304) 866-4415, rlcif@frontiernet.net; **67th Tact Recon Wing 11th, 12th, 15th & 45th Sqdns**, San Diego, 5/6-9, Ben Hardy, (619) 48-0659, cptdlttl@aol.com; **102nd AC&W Sqdn Assn**, Tarpon Springs, FL, 3/29-4/1, Hank Connors, (401) 437-1482, hank.connors@juno.com; **445th FIS (Wurtsmith AFB, MI)**, East Tawas, MI, 5/18-20, Bill Shelton, (423) 396-3950, billshelton@mindspring.com

637th AC&W Sqdn (Othello, WA), Branson, MO, 9/13-17, Bob Neil, (530) 877-0329, neil77938@cs.com; **7510th USAF Hosp 3rd Hosp Grp (Wimpole Park, England)**, San Antonio, 9/9-11, Joan Kjargaard, (250) 380-1289, p&kjar@telus.net; **Pilot Tng Class 55S**, San Antonio, 4/30-5/2, Marv Craig, (970) 493-0842, mrcraig@pilottraining55s.org; **SAC Abn Cmd Cont Syst (Post Attk Cmd Cont Syst)**, Omaha, NE, 9/22-26, Fred Kemp, (520) 393-1054, fkemp8367@aol.com

ARMY

4th Bn 23rd Inf "Tomahawks," Washington, 6/25-27, Heather Tyler, (703) 416-3840, conn5458@aol.com; **44th Eng Cbt Bn (WWII)**, Pigeon Forge, TN, 10/25-27, Albert B. Cline, (864) 489-6528; **52nd Eng Co, 62nd, 84th Eng Const Bns (Korea)**, Branson, MO, 4/19-23, Jack McGinnis, (314) 961-0208, dichm@aol.com; **76th Eng Const Bn**, Laughlin, NV, 4/29-5/1, Clinton Mathews, (228) 588-2840; **99th Inf Div "Checkerboard,"** Biloxi, MS, 8/1-5, Donna Bernhardt, donna@marionrecord.com

127th MP Co (Vietnam, 1960s & 1970s), Myrtle Beach, SC, 4/23-24, Jim Bruno, (845) 294-9158, jbb127mp@hvc.rr.com; **151st Cbt Eng (Korea)**, Columbia, MO, 5/27-6/1, Jerry Standley, (636) 296-1341; **281st Eng Cbt Bn (WWII)**, Sept, Albert B. Cline, (864) 489-6528; **353rd Comm Recon Co**, Westminster, MD, 6/7-10, Gus Gruneison, (502) 458-3743, asagus@aol.com

369th Eng Amph Support Rgt 6th Army (Forts Worden/Flagler, WA, Camp Desert Rock, NV & Korea), Tucson, AZ, 4/30-5/2, Tim Klecker, (520) 292-2294; **568th Ord Heavy Maint Co (Korea, 1950-1954)**, Atlanta, 9/15-18, Herb Peppers, (615) 883-1417, hpeppers@aol.com; **595th Eng Light Equip**, Manhattan, KS, 4/24, Richard J. O'Neil, (239) 592-6348, prmvay@aol.com; **602nd Tank Dest Bn Assn (WWII)**, Oklahoma City, 8/6-8, Raymond J. Young, (517) 332-8329

716th MP (Vietnam), Cincinnati, 8/27-29, Duane Hursey, (712) 544-2662, jdeh@frmctc.com; **728th MP & Satellite Units 8224th MP 552nd MP Co**, Springfield, MO, 6/24-26, Robert L. Jean, (417) 859-6518, rjean18205@aol.com; **735th Tank Bn Assn (WWII)**, Indianapolis, 9/16-18, Frank Chambers, (765) 284-9690,

snafufrank@comcast.net; **772nd MP Bn Vets Assn**, Tampa, FL, 4/29-5/1, Bill McDonald, (708) 422-3892, william.l.mcdonald@comcast.net; **819th Tank Dest Bn**, Pigeon Forge, TN, 9/26-28, Palmer J. Dawson, (301) 824-5136, jebd7@erols.com; **945th FA Bn**, Dayton, OH, 9/23-26, George A. Buck, (515) 255-4269; **Nat'l 4th Inf "Ivy" Div Assn (Illinois Chapter)**, Peoria, IL, 4/16-18, Bruce Gass, (217) 543-3641, gasshouse@one-eleven.net

COAST GUARD

Avn & Support Personnel, Reno, NV, 5/17-18, Bob E. Haley, (916) 782-7509, bhaley@aol.com; **USCGC Campbell W 32/909**, 5/20-24, King of Prussia, PA, Gordon Bell, (215) 822-2426, capbell@comcast.net

JOINT

34th Sig Bn 7th Corps, 123rd Sig Bn 3rd Inf Div, 7th Army Sig Support Bde, 2060th Radio Relay Sqdn, (Reisenbach, Germany, 1950-1969), Branson, MO, 9/3-13, Richard Spoley, (773) 334-4948, rvspol@comcast.net; **Berlin Airlift Vets Assn**, Orlando, FL, 5/12-15, L. Dale Whipple, (318) 965-9860, ldalewhip@aol.com; **Blue Goose Club Vets & Mil Friends Mass Reunion**, Peoria, IL, 9/10-11, (419) 229-6689, bluegooseclubusa@aol.com; **Normandy D-Day Reunion Grp 60th Anniversary**, London, May, Sy Canton, (561) 865-8495

MARINES

Embassy Guard Assn, Biloxi, MS, 4/29-5/1, David Ledbetter, (870) 352-2109, davidl@seark.net

NAVY

Deslant Boxers (1950-1956), Atlantic City, NJ, 6/25-27, Chico Segura, (505) 524-9127, psegura@zianet.com; **Dest Escort & APD Sailors Assn**, Fort Mitchell, KY, 9/26, Richard A. Ager, (301) 459-3545, de60ager@aol.com; **Fleet Air Wing 6**, Tunica, MS, 8/4-5, Mike Hall, (918) 339-2773, rosebike@cvok.net; **Harbor Clearance Unit 1**, Charleston, SC, 6/20-24, Dave Peterson, (410) 257-2331, speterson@chesapeake.net

MCB-4 (All Eras), Branson, MO, 5/24-27, Nick Marschhauser, (800) 313-3672, nick@nickstents.com; **NAS Sanford & All Sqdns**, Sanford, FL, 6/25-27, Gerald Bohm, (386) 668-4851; **NMCB-11**, Branson, MO, 9/23-26, Larry Hagler, (512) 267-8873, mc11.reunion@earthlink.net; **NWSA**, Atlantic City, NJ, 6/7-10, Hugh Bucher, (609) 693-3973, chaero4@aol.com; **Odin Grp VB-11(F), VB-101, VP-51, VP-54, PATSU 1-2 & CASU (F)56 (WWII)**, Springfield, MO, 9/16-19, Donald Hatcher, (763) 533-8323

Sub Dev Grp 1 Bathyscaph Trieste II DSV 1, Silverdale, WA, 9/9-12, Stan Reinhold, (623) 536-6547, sreinhold@cox.net; **USNR Cub 10 & Navy 3115 All Divs**, Marion, OH,

6/23-25, Gale Edwin Rollison, (740) 389-3097; **USS Albuquerque PF 7**, Branson, MO, 4/30-5/3, Charles Toler, (225) 775-5809, cnmtoler@aol.com; **USS Alfred A. Cunningham DD 752 (1944-1971)**, Asheville, NC, 8/30-9/2, James C. Forbes, (252) 393-2644, forbesnj@coastalnet.com; **USS Clay APA 39**, Merrillville, IN, 9/8-11, Jim Nolan, (219) 769-8134; **USS Cony DD/DDE 508**, Baton Rouge, LA, 4/21-25, Ken Cox, (863) 815-0882, kecox@yahoo.com

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USS LST 1126 (Snohomish County), Las Vegas, 8/16-19, J.C. Miller, (818) 340-0463, jcsrockie@dslextre.com; **USS Lynde McCormick DDG 8**, San Diego, 9/16-18, Bob Wefald, (701) 223-8975, bobwefald@earthlink.net; **USS Moale DD 693**, Mobile, AL, 5/13-16, Larry Liming, (610) 970-2302, larry@larryliming.com; **USS Montpelier CL 57**, Valley Forge, PA, 9/9, Jackie Frazier, (513) 231-4402, jackiefrazier@aol.com; **USS Nelson DD 623**, Myrtle Beach, SC, 9/16-18, Arthur Hec.kel, (252) 223-2789, ltreibel@gt.rr.com

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VP-90, NAS JRB New Orleans, 3/12-14,
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 Meyer, 1934 3rd St. N. St. Cloud, MN 56303,
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Grp (Pforzheim, Germany) 1960s, Larry
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16th Sig Bn (Fort Huachuca, AZ & Butzbach,
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42nd Eng Const Bn (Aleutians, 1942-1944),
 Quentin Moad, (580) 928-2367

81st Constab Sqdn (Fulda, Germany, 1946-
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 carol1531@wmconnect.com

85th Inf Div HQ Co 3rd Bn 338th Rgt, David
 Longer, 2032 Town Square H, Manheim, PA
 17545

91st Strat Recon Wing/Sqdn (Yakota,
Barksdale & Lockbourne AFB, 1948-1957), Jim
 Bard, (410) 549-1094, jimbardjr@adelphia.net

94th CAAA (Camp Davis, NC, May 1941-Feb
1942), Glen Symons, (906) 482-2434

99th FA HQ Btry 1st Cav Div (amp Bender,
Japan, 1950), Richard J. Meyer, (215) 885-3324
108th, 168th, 180th Bomb Sqds (Bordeaux
& Laon, 1951-1953), Gene Westerman, (847)
 742-8711, westy1931@aol.com

109th MP Plt V Corps (Gutleut Kaserne,
Frankfurt, Germany, 1964-1965), Bob
 McCoy, (217) 425-1916, rmmc67@msn.com
125th, 128th Chem Cos (Camp Sibert, AK &
Pacific, 1943-1945), Mike Bertolino, (724)
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169th FA A Btry 43rd Inf Div (Luzon,
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283rd FA Bn (June 1943-May 1945), Jim Parker,
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427th Army Serv Forces Band (Paris, 1945-
1947), Al Moratz, (863) 324-7921, alnorene@
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453rd MP Co (1950-1952), Ralph L. Landry, P.O.
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560th QM Comp Serv Co (Korea, Oct 1950-
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606th AAA Gun Bn C Btry (Grand Island, NY,
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1954-1958), Lowell Colwell, (419) 394-8592,
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744th CAAA (South Pacific, Feb 1942-Aug
1944), Glen Symons, (906) 482-2434

761st AC&W Sqdn (North Bend, OR, 1954-
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874th A/B Eng Avn Bn (New Guinea &
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1997th AACS Sq (Fort Pepperrell,
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1959-1961), Fred L. Thompson, (318) 335-2025

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Cav (Bamberg, Germany, 1958-1963), Joe
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A Btry 2nd Howitzer Bn 4th Ad (Furth,
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A Co 141st Sig Bn (Baron Barracks, Ansbach,
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A Co 160th Rgt 40th Div (Korea, Oct 1952-
Aug 1953), Robert E. Kirk, (217) 774-4619,
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A Co 307th ASA Bn APO 171 (Helmstedt,
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B Co 1st ARB 46th Inf (Munich, Germany,
1957-1958), Toney R. Perry, 2427 45th St.
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Commissary Dept US Naval Stat Guam (1955-
1956), Jim Paglia, 4875 El Verano, Atascadero,
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D Co 29th Armd Inf Bn 3rd Armd Div (Fort
Knox, KY & Gelnhause, Germany, July
1955-June 1957), Roy Gilder, (912) 568-7696

DEW Line Queen Victoria Id (1956), Jim
 Gallagher, (515) 967-4816

Elect Supply Depot (Albany, GA, 1954-
1956), Joe Masterson, (941) 629-9234,
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HQ 90th Arty Grp Ad (Warrensville Stat, OH,
1965-1966), Harold C. Goettner, (410) 239-
 3730, yancy97@aol.com

HQ Co 2nd Bn 87th Inf 10th Inf Div
(Schaffenburg, Germany, 1957), Jim R.
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 boygan.wi.us

King Co 38th Rgt 2nd Div (Hill 1179, Chosin
Reservoir, Korea, Aug-Oct 1951), Simon B.
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Plt 133 (MCRD Parris Island, SC, Feb-Apr 1952), Mac Brown, (804) 515-1955
Plt 188 Parris Island (Sept-Dec 1964), John Ange, (302) 422-9028, youra46@aol.com
Plt 3092 MCRD San Diego (Aug-Oct 1966), Larry Chance, (918) 245-5762, lchance1313@juno.com
SAC Elite Guard 3902nd CDS 3906th SP Sec Sq (Offutt AFB, NE, 1957-2003), George Tuttle, (402) 451-3716, gtoget@aol.com
USS Caliente AO 53 (1958-1961), Miguel F. Ronquillo, (520) 281-0068, mfronquillo@aol.com
USS Charles Berry DE 1035, Mac Christy, (785) 255-4368, machief@directway.com
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TAPS

Robert J. Conrad, Dept. of Hawaii. Dept. Cmdr. 1984-1985, Nat'l Exec. Cmte. Memb.

1985-1995, Nat'l Americanism Cmsn. Liaison Cmte. Memb. 1986-1988, Nat'l Internal Affairs Cmsn. Liaison Cmte. Memb. 1988-1989 and 1992-1995, Nat'l Conv. Liaison Cmte. Memb. 1989-1991, Nat'l Legis. Cncl. Memb. 1989-2003, Nat'l Legis. Cmsn. Liaison Memb. 1991-1993, Nat'l Legis. Cmsn. Liaison Memb. 1991-1993 and Nat'l Americanism Cncl. Vice Chmn. 1995-1996.
Thomas T. Nakahara, Dept. of Hawaii. Nat'l Distinguished Guests Cmte. Memb. 1956-1957, Dept. Cmdr. 1961-1962, Nat'l Mbrshp. & Post Activ. Cmte. Memb. 1966-1967 and Nat'l Legis. Cncl. Memb. 1985-1986.
Ben Rowlinson Jr., Dept. of New York. Nat'l Foreign Relations Cncl. Vice Chmn. 1997-2001 and Nat'l Mbrshp. & Post Activ. Cmte. Consultant 2001-2003.
Donald A. Sisco, Dept. of Vermont. Nat'l Mbrshp. & Post Activ. Cmte. Memb. 1974-1975, Dept. Cmdr. 1976-1977, Nat'l Naval Affairs Cmte. Memb. 1976-1979 and 1991-1994, Nat'l Exec. Cmte. Alt. Memb. 1976-1979, Nat'l Veterans Affairs & Rehab. Cmsn. Liaison Cmte. Memb. 1979-1980, Nat'l Exec. Cmte. Memb. 1979-1981, Nat'l Econ. Cmsn. Liaison Cmte. 1980-1981 and Nat'l Merchant Marine Cmsn. Memb. 1981-1990.
Peter B. Wilson, Dept. of Idaho. Nat'l Distinguished Guests Cmte. Memb. 1956-1957, Dept. Cmdr. 1958-1959, Nat'l Exec. Cmte. Memb. 1960-1962, Nat'l Agricultural & Conservation Cmte. Chmn. 1960, Nat'l Foreign Relations Cmsn. Liaison Cmte. Memb. 1960-1962, Nat'l Special Subcmte. on Uniform Code of Military Justice & Court of Military Appeals Memb. 1963-1964 and Nat'l Legis. Cncl. Memb. 1975-1978.

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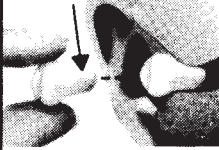
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parting shots

The reason so few women are politicians is that it's too much trouble to put makeup on two faces.

A FIRST-GRADER couldn't stop talking about the recent fire at his school. "I knew it was going to happen," he said. "We've been practicing for it all year."

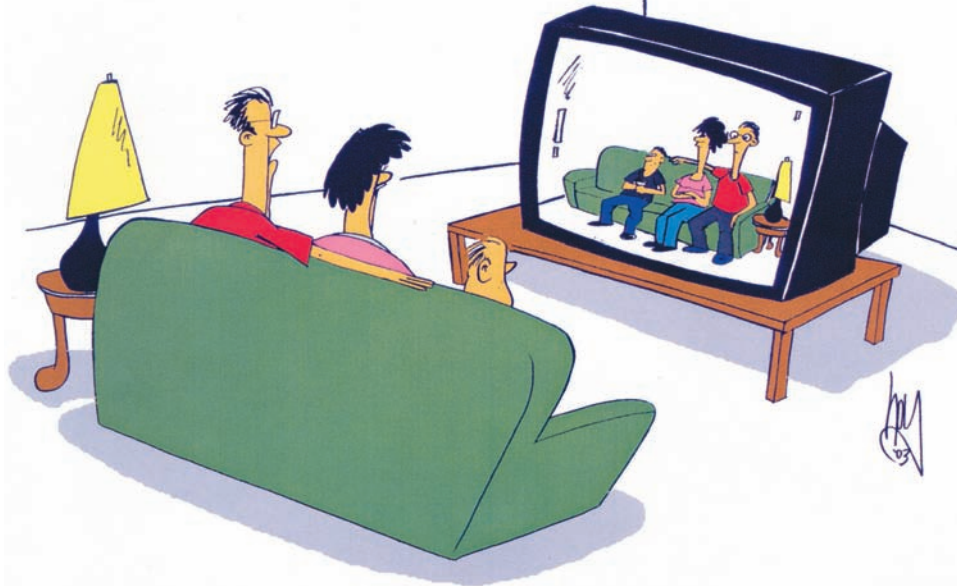
WITH HIS PLATOON at attention, the drill instructor yelled, "All right! All you dummies fall out." As the rest of the recruits walked away, one man remained at attention. The drill instructor walked over until he was eye to eye with the man, raising just a single eyebrow. The recruit smiled and said, "Sure was a lot of 'em, huh, sir?"

THREE BUDDIES die in a car crash, and they find themselves at an orientation in heaven. Each man is asked, "When you're lying in your casket and friends and family are mourning, what would you most like to hear them say about you?"

The first man says, "I'd like to hear them say that I was a great doctor and a family man."

The second man says, "I'd like to hear that I was a wonderful husband and schoolteacher who made a huge difference in children's lives."

The third man says, "I'd like to hear them say, 'Look! He's moving!'"



"Now *this* is reality TV."

"THE MOST REMARKABLE thing about my mother is that for 30 years she served the family nothing but leftovers. The original meal has never been found."

— Sam Levinson

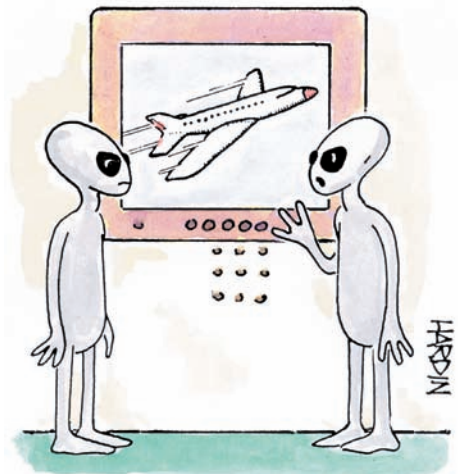
A YOUNG GIRL asked her father if all fairy tales begin with the words "Once upon a time."

"No," he replied. "A whole bunch begin with the words 'If elected, I promise.'"

A YOUNG MAN watched an elderly couple sit down to lunch at a restaurant. He noticed that they had ordered one meal and an extra drink cup. As he watched, the older man carefully divided the hamburger in half, then counted out the fries — one for him, one for her, until each had an even number. Then the older man poured half

the soft drink into the extra cup and set it in front of his wife. The older man then began to eat, and his wife sat watching with her hands folded in her lap.

The young man hesitated, then approached the couple and asked if they



"Your videotape is intriguing, but it still doesn't prove they exist."

would allow him to purchase another meal for them so that they wouldn't have to split theirs.

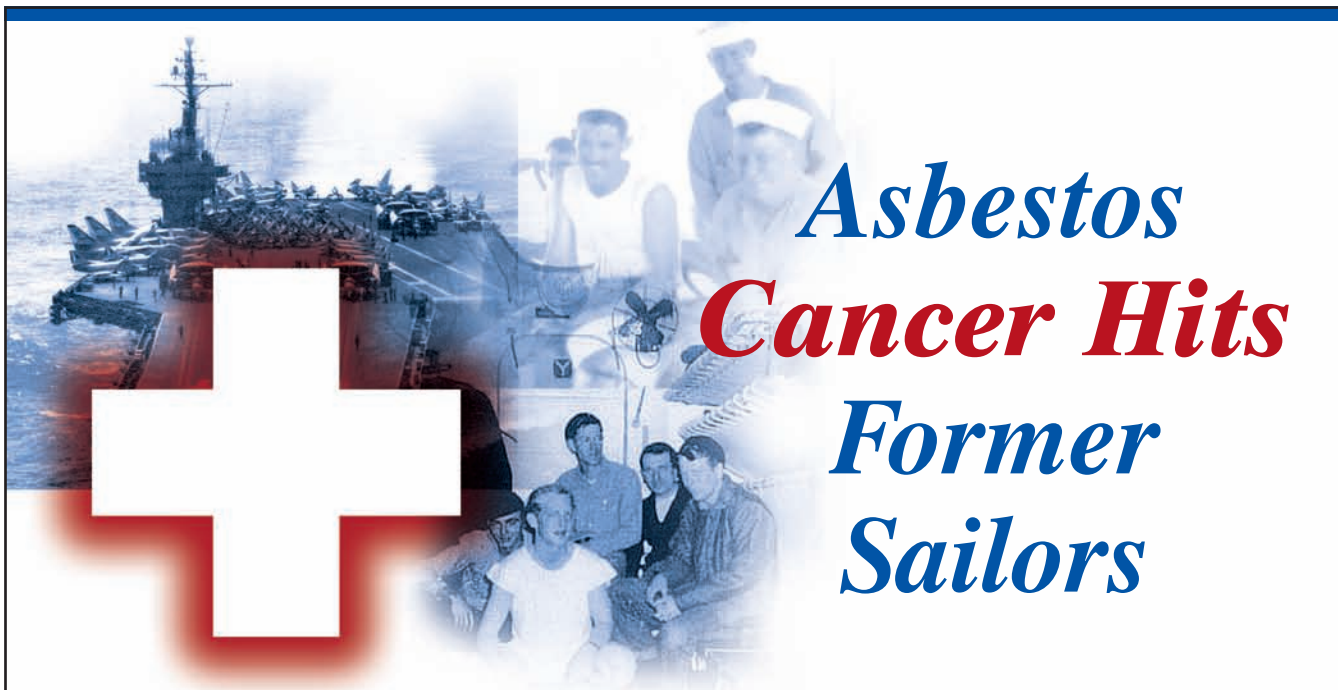
The older man said, "Oh no. We've been married 50 years, and everything has always been and will always be shared 50-50."

The young man then asked the older woman if she was going to eat. "Later," she replied. "It's his turn with the teeth."

HEARD ABOARD a public-transportation vehicle: "When you exit the bus, please be sure to lower your head and watch your step. If you miss your step and hit your head, please lower your voice and watch your language. Thank you."



"I like what you've done here, Tim. That's why I'll be taking credit for it."



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